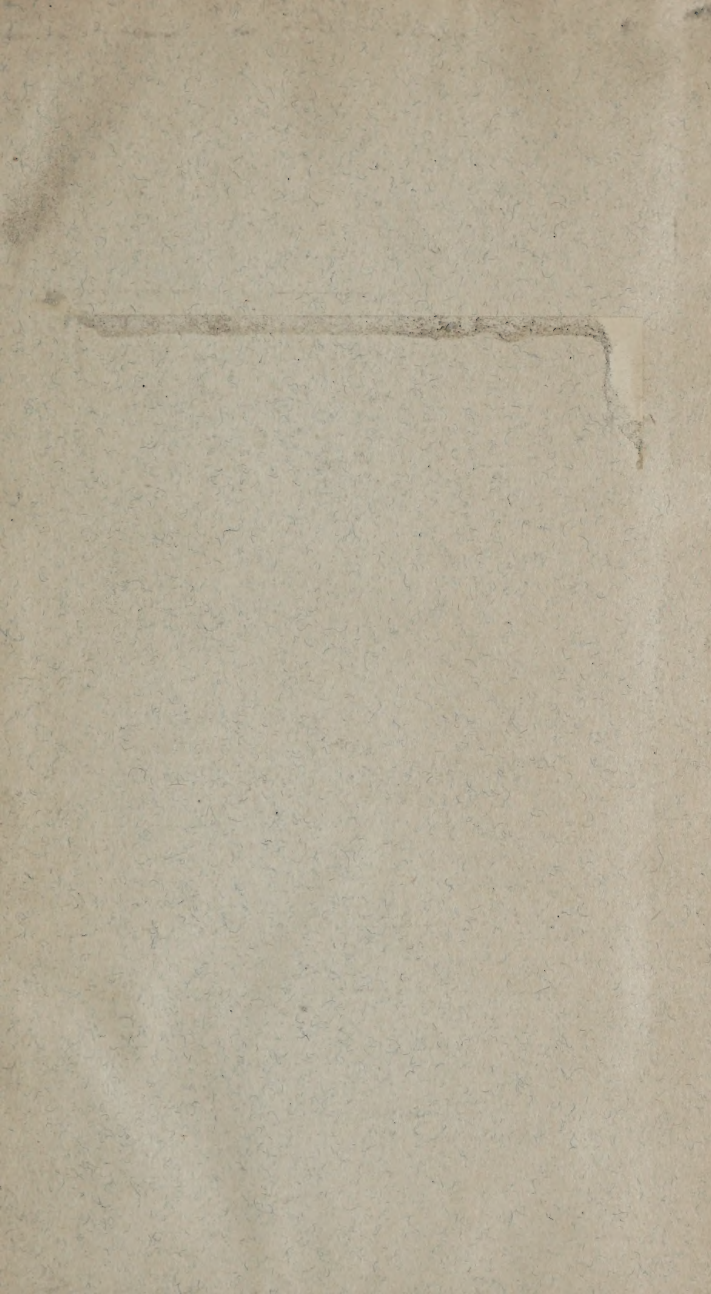


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W. Phillips.



FRIENDLY LETTERS

TO

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

ON SOME OF THEIR

DISTINGUISHING PRINCIPLES.

BY RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

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LETTER I.

INTRODUCTORY, AND MISCELLANEOUS.

FRIENDS,

IN so addressing you, I wish to be understood as using, not merely the distinctive designation by which you have chosen to denominate yourselves as a body of professing Christians, but a designation expressive of personal regard. I have not been an inattentive or uninterested observer of the agitation that has, for some time past, pervaded your society; and I have felt a strong inclination, blending with a hardly less strong repugnance, to “show mine opinion.”—The cause of my repugnance may be easily imagined. I may seem to many an officious intermeddler. I may fasten upon myself the unenviable character of a gratuitous and forward disputant, fond of the gauntlet, most unconscionably enamoured of controversy, when I thus, as it will be thought, go so far out of my way to find it,—when I cannot leave

a Christian community, between which and myself there subsists no bond of connexion, to carry on, without interference, its own discussions, and settle its own disputes.—The inclination, however, has proved still stronger than the repugnance; and I trust, that, when it is with friends I have to do, and it is in the spirit of friendship that I enter their arena, I shall not verify the proverb of the wise man, and, in “meddling with strife that belongeth not to me,” find myself in the predicament of “one that taketh a dog by the ears.”

The inclination thus to address you has arisen from two sources.—The first is, the esteem in which, on various grounds, I have long been accustomed to hold the Society of Friends; an esteem generated and maintained by both public and private, official and personal acquaintance. The part which they have all along acted in a variety of the leading objects of humanity and Christian benevolence, has entitled them to it. They have been the staunch promoters of the suppression of the slave-trade and the abolition of slavery; of the circulation of the Bible; of universal education; of the mitigation of our sanguinary penal code; and of charitable relief in all its forms.—Their high average character for simplicity, integrity, and general moral worth, has entitled them to it; a character which, with whatever amount of exceptions, either as to practice or principle, it may be

regarded, could never have been so extensively earned, and so long maintained, without a corresponding reality. While I can smile at some of their peculiarities, and gravely condemn others, I yet cannot but hold them, as a body, in affectionate respect.—And this respect, resting on public grounds, has been confirmed by personal acquaintance, and the intimacies of friendship. I may possibly have been fortunate in the individuals and families with whom I have had the pleasure of intercourse, and the little *coteries* of Quaker society into which circumstances have thrown me; but assuredly, from all with whom I have come into contact, my favourable impressions have received great accessions of strength. Those among whom my lot has been cast, I have found, not only the steady and zealous friends of every measure of public benevolence, but amiable, social, and kind in private intercourse, cheerful without levity, and serious without moroseness. I have seldom felt happier than when, in the bosom of their domestic and friendly circles.—Now, you must be aware, that in proportion to the degree in which our esteem and affection are engaged, the deeper becomes our *régret*, that in those who are the objects of them there should be aught which we are constrained to disapprove; and especially when this is the case in what relates to their spiritual and eternal interests,—compared with which, in the Christian's estimate, all

else is lighter than vanity.—It is thus I have felt towards you. In the Quaker system of doctrine and practice, as expounded in those works which have heretofore been considered as the accredited standards of their profession, there have appeared to me such defects and errors, as well as such confused and indefinite generality on essential points, as are inconsistent with a Scriptural faith and a true subjection to Christ, detrimental to the spiritual life, and even hazardous to the soul's salvation.—You will pardon me, then, if, in these circumstances, affection prompts to remonstrance. When the young man came to our blessed Master, inquiring the terms of admission into the kingdom of heaven, it is said that “Jesus, beholding him, loved him.” The Saviour's affection, in this case, was not, we may be assured, that of complacency in his principles and character; for he had spoken of himself with all the vain self-sufficiency of the Pharisee, unconscious of defect, and elated with the expectation of such a flattering reception as he conceived due to his merits,—a state of mind in which he who came “to seek and to save that which was lost” must have felt any thing but satisfaction:—it was the tenderness of compassion, a feeling engendered in that gracious bosom by the sight of a youth, it is not unlikely of interesting and prepossessing appearance, labouring under such miserable self-delusion,—puffed up with self-righteous conceit, and, judging by

the test to which he was immediately brought by him who “knew what was in man,” “loving this present world,” and, with an ungenerous selfishness, “laying up for himself treasures upon earth.” Jesus “beheld” this youth with the “pity” which “melts the mind to love;” and, the tenderer that affectionate compassion, the severer would be the pang with which, aware of the result, he applied the test, and sent him away “sorrowful.”—In this, as in every thing else, our Redeemer has “left us an example that we should follow his steps.” I quote the case at present, with no further application, than as it exemplifies the principle by which we should ever seek to be actuated. Whatever be the nature and grounds of our affection, there cannot be a greater mistake than that we should spare those we love; that we should prefer their pleasure to their profit; that we should rather leave them in delusion than disturb their repose; rather let them hold their errors than subject them to the pain of their discovery. This would be hatred, not love; cruelty, not kindness. There is no greater favour we can do to a friend, than displacing error in his mind, and introducing truth. And according to the measure of our friendship, and the importance of the error and the truth, will be our solicitude to accomplish this end.

The second source of the interest I have felt in the recent agitations of your Society, is to be found in

the part formerly taken by me in a controversy which involves the essential elements of Christianity. I mean, of course, that which relates to the Socinian heresy. The connexion here you will find no difficulty in discerning. The remarkable and melancholy fact, of so large a secession from your community in the United States to errors of a quite analogous description, if they may not even be pronounced identical, very naturally, as you will allow, drew my attention, and stimulated inquiry as to the tendency of some of your principles. Even although, in the Quaker system, there were some things which appeared the very antipodes of Socinianism,—the latter discarding every thing of the nature of direct divine influence on the human mind, and avowedly inimical to all spiritual excitement, presenting a scheme of self-sufficient and frigid rationalism;—yet there were other points respecting which, it seemed to me, it would be far from easy to acquit them of the imputation of a tendency to such a result, although that tendency may generally, in regard at least to outward profession, have been counteracted by other causes. In saying so, I have a special reference in my mind to the views entertained by Quakers respecting the Holy Scriptures;—the secondary place which they assign to them; their subordination, in point of authority, to the inward light; and the difficulty,—in spite of all that can be said of its

being a gift of the Spirit and not of nature, and a benefit resulting from the merits of Christ's mediation,—of distinguishing, or at least maintaining the distinction, in minds that are not sufficiently imbued with a previous mysticism, between the *light* of the Quaker and the *reason* of the Socinian. Even the most intelligent Friends, while they lay down the distinction as an article of their system, find it no easy matter to keep the two clear of each other in their illustrations and reasonings. And if even in the writings of such men this difficulty is apparent, how much greater must it be to ordinary minds, unaccustomed to discriminative thought!—how much more prevalent in such minds the propensity to confound the two together,—universal light with universal reason! Of the Quaker sentiments respecting the Scriptures I shall speak at large by and by:—at present I merely hint at one of their tendencies, as perhaps exemplified in a special case; the idolizing of *the light* having a similar effect on the mind of the thorough-going Friend, in reducing the paramount authority of Scripture as the direct and only standard of religious truth, with the idolizing of *reason* on the mind of the thorough-going Socinian.*

* What Socinian could desire a loftier eulogy of Reason, than is to be found in the words of one of your earliest writers, one who may be reckoned among the founders of your Society—William Penn? “Right reason I mean—the Reason of the first

Be not offended with me, when I say (for I say it in kindness and under correction) that this tendency is indebted, amongst Friends, for an augmentation of its strength, to a prevailing deficiency in their system of religious instruction,—that all-important branch of early education which consists in the communication of general religious knowledge to the mind. I am anxious to avoid all inculpatory reflexion that may not have foundation in fact. But is it not so, that too little attention has been bestowed amongst you on this department of tuition,—the informing of the youthful mind as to the principles and general contents of the inspired oracles, and as to the evidences of their divine authority? Is there generally, among Friends, such a system of domestic scriptural instruction, or of such instruction in Sabbath schools in cases where it is not enjoyed at home, as is calculated to impart any thing like enlarged and connected views of divine truth? Is the mere practice of daily reading a portion of Scripture, with a few moments of silence, however solemn, before and after, as a domestic exercise, at all sufficient for such a purpose? Or are silent public meetings,—or meet-

nine verses of the first chapter of John. For so Tertullian gives us the word Logos; and the Divine Reason is one in all; that lamp of God which lights our candle, and enlightens our darkness, and is the measure and test of our knowledge.”—Quoted by Richard Ball, in his “Holy Scripture the Test of Truth,” Note, page 93.

ings where, in that which is said, there is little or no appeal to the sacred records, the direct movements of the Spirit taking precedence of them, by any means fitted to supply the deficiency? It is easy, on such a subject, to speak of the benefits of *getting still*,—and to say many plausible things as to the necessity in religion, both as a part of its essential exercises and of the means of its growth, of meditation, and quiet musing, and the introversion of the mind's eye upon itself. But you should not forget, that to true and profitable meditation materials of thought are necessary. The mind that has little or no information on the subjects of religious musing will generally muse to little purpose; nay, as it can hardly be an entire vacancy, I fear they are but sciolists in the knowledge of human nature, who, in such circumstances, will commit it to its own thoughts without the apprehension of pernicious rather than of salutary results. Deem me not uncharitable,—tell me not that I judge of others by myself, if I venture to surmise, that, were there such a tribunal as a *Quaker confessional*, there would come to light before it many a thought of vanity, if not of worse than vanity, that has seemed a part of silent devotion. Nay, is there no such sentiment among you as a jealousy of the human tuition in question, as if it were an interference with the province of the Holy Spirit, derogatory to the supremacy and sufficiency of the

inward light, and a taking of the mind, as it were, out of the hands of God?—And if I am right in suspecting the prevalence amongst you, from such causes, of a defect of information on religious subjects,—may not the existence of this defect contribute, in no small degree, to account for the fact of so many, when controversial discussions do arise, being shaken, and falling away? Ignorance, or very partial information, can never be a safe-guard against error, or a preparative for withstanding either its sapping and undermining insinuations, or its more direct argumentative assaults. It is quite the contrary. In such circumstances, knowledge is power; ignorance weakness. The uninformed mind is taken by surprise. With flimsy and confused conceptions of truth itself, and little acquaintance with either the evidence in its support or the objections against it, it is quite unprepared to meet the arguments of heresy, and, when they are presented, in their imposing dogmatism, or their subtle plausibility, is startled into scepticism ere it is well aware. To commit the young to the world in this state of ignorance, is like sending out an uninstructed and inexperienced mariner on a voyage, without giving him any information of the rocks, and sands, and currents, and winds, to be expected by him in his course,—without furnishing him with a chart of the seas he has to traverse, or showing him how to use it; so that he is utterly

unqualified for avoiding or for encountering the dangers that lie in his track, and may find himself in the very midst of perils from which escape is impossible, while he is fancying nothing before him but a clear sea, propitious breezes, and a safe haven.

In saying these things, I am anxious to guard against two misconceptions. The first is, that I say them in ignorance of the counsels, on the subject of "parents and education," contained in the Society's "Rules of Discipline with Advices," in which a careful instruction in the contents of Holy Scripture is recommended and urged on parents and guardians, in extracts from the minutes and letters of many successive yearly meetings. This would be a mistake. I have the third edition of the "Rules of Discipline, &c.," lying before me. The counsels therein given on this important subject are excellent. It would evince an unreasonable jealousy, and hypercritical captiousness, to find any very material fault with them. But this is not the present question. The existence of these advices is one thing; their reduction to practice is another. The question is, whether a practical conformity to these advices has been generally prevalent in the Society;—or whether the Quaker youth, taken in the aggregate, do, in point of fact, evince a fair average of Scriptural information.—And here I would guard my reader against a second misconception,—as if I intended to advance a

charge of the contrary, without exceptions. Far from it. I believe that there are exceptions, and I rejoice to believe farther, that the number of these exceptions is decidedly on the increase :—and I cannot but regard the multiplication of instances of exemplary attention, on the part of parents, to this essential branch of their duty, as one of the gratifying symptoms of a begun and advancing amelioration in the body.—But I more than fear I am right, in conceiving the average amount of religious, that is, of Scriptural knowledge, as having been, generally speaking, in the Society of Friends, unhappily and characteristically low. And the secondary place which, in their standard works, and by the venerated fathers of the system, is assigned to the Divine volume, as the rule of faith and conduct, is quite sufficient, independently of every thing else, to account for the fact, as one which it was no more than reasonable to anticipate. And even in the excellent advices in your Book of Discipline, there occur such occasional allusions to your primary principle of the inward light, and the immediate and independent guidance of the Spirit, as to enfeeble the force of that influence upon the conscience which they would have possessed, had the Holy Scriptures been distinctly acknowledged as the supreme and only authoritative test of religious truth, and source of religious instruction. I refer to such sentences as these, which

occur in immediate connexion with the inculcation of Scripture instruction:—" They " (parents) " will " frequently feel the vast importance of doing their " utmost to cultivate in their tender offspring a humble obedience *to the teachings of the Lord's Spirit*; " and, as they advance in years, to establish in them a " firm belief of *the all-sufficiency of this holy Guide*:"* —" On this principle," —(the correct and important principle, that " we cannot of ourselves produce religion in the mind")—" we must make it our *chief object* to direct the early and constant attention of " our offspring *to the Spirit of Christ within them*, from " which alone can spring the fruits of righteousness:"† —" and in order hereunto," (that is, to their " instructing them in the nature and necessity of being born from above, without which, our Lord declared, no man shall see the kingdom of God") " that they labour to bring them acquainted with *the holy seed, which is sown by the Divine hand in every heart for that gracious end*."—This last sentence occurs immediately after the specification of the duty of " encouraging children, as well by example as by precept, to the frequent reading of the Holy Scriptures:"—but it is evident, that instruction in those truths which the Holy Scriptures reveal is not regarded, nor recommended, as the principal means of regeneration,

* Pages 203, 204.

† Page 200.

—but rather an early acquaintance with the *inward light*, here intended (as the established nomenclature of Quakerism might be adduced to show) by “the holy seed which is sown by the Divine hand in every heart for that gracious end.”—And is it not a point of fact, that, in the process of early religious education, there has, amongst Friends, been more dependence on this supposed “holy seed” than on the written word, and a consequent disposition to leave the desired effect chiefly to its operation? Has there not been, amongst the really well-disposed and serious members of your communion, more of a propensity to encourage, in the terms of the same publication, “a humble waiting for, and feeling after, those “secret and tender visitations of Divine love, which “are afforded for the help and direction of all,”—than, by a steady and persevering process of Biblical instruction, to replenish the minds of the rising generation with a well-digested knowledge of divine truth?—I have alluded, with satisfaction, to the multiplying instances amongst you of attention to Scriptural instruction in the fulfilment of the parental trust. It has been with a similar satisfaction, and a similar anticipation of benefit, that I have heard of meetings held with the rising youth of your Society by some of your senior members, for the express purpose of reading the Sacred volume, and explaining, in familiar remark and conversation, its divine contents. But,

in proportion as this has imparted pleasure, has the information, on the other hand, distressed me, that the practice has occasioned umbrage, awakened jealousy, and drawn forth, from some of the more staunch adherents of your *testimonies*, serious admonition; and that attempts have been made to suppress these Bible classes, as if they were hazardous to your principles! Has not this been the case? And do you really think, that the spirit, from which proceeded the suggestion of such counsels and such attempts, could be the Spirit of God,—the Spirit by which the Scriptures were dictated?—that the same Spirit that gave the lessons, gave also the advice to withhold them?—Are not such facts rather to be regarded as additional evidence of the timidity and *shyness* (to use the gentlest terms) which have existed among you in regard to direct Biblical instruction,—springing from the apprehension, that too much regard to the *secondary* rule might have the effect of drawing off the attention of the rising youth from that which you regard as *primary*? The mistake and presumption involved in such a sentiment, and in such a fear, will be afterwards considered.

Allow me farther to ask you, whether, in Quaker education, the object, to a very great extent, has not been rather to fashion Friends than to make Christians?—to impart acquaintance with distinguishing peculiarities, rather than with great essential princi-

ples?—to train to external conformity, rather than to impart mental illumination? Has it not consisted in rearing to habits of morality,—of simplicity in appearance and manners, of integrity and truth in daily intercourse, of humanity and kindness, of domestic affection, of order, punctuality, industry, economy, sobriety, and moderation, with all those other virtues by which personal and social respectability, comfort, and usefulness in the present world are promoted;—while too little attention has been shown to the inculcation of those great evangelical truths, in which are contained the only motives to moral duty which the God of the Gospel sanctions,—and the faith of which, in their apostolic purity, is the grand principle of the whole Christian character? Has your *moral training* been sufficiently founded in *evangelical instruction*,—in the knowledge and belief of divine truths? I fear not. Am I wrong? I shall rejoice to be assured that I am. But if, to any considerable extent, my apprehension is well-founded, the error is a grievous one, and perilous to souls. It separates morality from religion; duty from faith. Unless a character be formed on Gospel principles,—its moral virtues springing from the faith of divine truths,—it is essentially defective:—it is worse,—its very foundation is wrong,—its primary elements unsound.

But is not the formation of characters of this description greatly encouraged by your regarding all

belonging to the families of your Society as *born Quakers*?—as members of your community by natural birth? The divine record tells us, that the genuine subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom are “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”* It is the testimony of the Redeemer's own lips—“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”† Is sufficient, or indeed is any regard shown by Friends to this, in reception to the privileges of membership? Is there, amongst them, any formal admission of the young to their fellowship, or any formal application, on the part of the young, for such admission? Is there any examination of their knowledge of divine truth, or of the evidence of its having been to them “the power of God unto salvation?”—any investigation into the Scriptural marks of a saving change having passed upon them,—of their having been born again? If not, is it at all wonderful that there should be found many growing up amongst you in melancholy ignorance of divine truth, and consequently without the distinctive influence of evangelical principle, and, amidst all the peculiarities of Quakerism, and all the decencies, and proprieties, and conventional virtues of society, with little of what the Bible denominates “the power of *godliness*?”—little

* John i. 12.

† John iii. 3.

of the holiness of the saint, as distinguished from the virtue of the moralist? When there is a strict conformity maintained to those peculiar practices in which the "*testimonies*" of Friends are regarded as especially consisting, is not this apt to pass for enough, and to supersede inquiry into what is, beyond controversy and beyond comparison, more important, the spiritual state and character of "the hidden man of the heart?"—I do not find, among your "*Rules of Discipline*," &c., any instructions with regard to the application of the young for reception into your religious communion, or the examination of their knowledge, principles, and character, with this view. I find particular directions on the subject of accurate registration of births, &c.; from which, as well as from visible facts, I conclude, that all children of Quaker parents, when born into the world, are born into the Society, and grow up as acknowledged members of it, without any subsequent investigation or recognition, on the part of the body at large, or of the particular meeting with which the parents happen to be connected. Is it to be wondered at, in these circumstances, that there should not only exist amongst you a great deficiency of religious information, but an extraordinary diversity of religious opinion;—so that, to know a man to be a Quaker is to have no sure or definite conception whatever of his creed, or of any thing else than his conformity, more

or less strictly maintained, to the marked external peculiarities of the body?

I hope I may be allowed still farther, without subjecting myself to the imputation of "all uncharitableness," of the guilt of which imputation my inmost soul would acquit me, to suggest it to you, as one of the points of danger incident to a Society that has stood out with so prominent a distinctiveness as yours, that it is proportionally prone to admit the influence, consciously or unconsciously, of the *esprit du corps*. I put it to the truly and humbly pious among you (for such I rejoice to know there are) whether they are not sensible of a risk of this principle having more exercise than it ought to have, not only in keeping up attention to the outward badges and the special testimonies of Quakerism, but even in maintaining, to a certain degree, the high standard of Quaker *morality* itself? The body has obtained a character; and where such a character has been obtained, I freely and gladly grant the credit of having deserved it: for however frequently individuals may impose on individuals, a whole body of men cannot be supposed to delude the community, and to maintain the delusion so successfully and so long. But while I admit a reality corresponding to the reputation, I cannot, with the sense I have of the deceitfulness of my own heart, and with my eyes open to the observation of others, be blind to the danger

thence arising of the operation of motives of mingled and dubious rectitude in the maintenance of it. There is, I admit, a regard to character, such as, both in individuals and in societies, is not only justifiable, but incumbent. Usefulness and influence are dependent upon it. The possession of it is not merely agreeable to ourselves; it is profitable as a means of doing good. But in our sinful world, and our state of imperfection, there is no good that does not border upon evil. The bordering evil, in the present case, is *pride of character*; a self-complacency, which finds cover and apology under principles of unquestionable propriety. May not the inquiry be deserving of a place, in the process of self-examination, to what extent the morality of Quakerism may be indebted to the reflexion, *we must keep up the character of the body*? Which of the two considerations most frequently and most readily presents itself to the mind, respecting any action of doubtful correctness—This would be inconsistent with my character *as a Friend*,—or, this would be inconsistent with my character *as a Christian*?—And when deviations from the line of duty have occurred, of a public and discreditable nature, whether is the shock that is felt more imputable to the injury sustained from it by the reputation of the Society,—the blot cast upon the fair fame of Friends,—or to the dishonour accruing to the name of Christ, and the wrong done to

the interests of true religion in general?—I throw out these things, not as the insinuations of a spiteful malice, or even of an uncharitable suspiciousness, but as friendly hints for your ingenuous consideration. And, since I am throwing out such suggestions, may I be allowed to add another,—namely, that even in the midst of all the external indications of lowliness, there is imminent danger of the very character to which I have alluded, and for which, considered in itself, the Friends are justly esteemed and commended, engendering a spirit that is, more than any other, at variance with the very genius of the Gospel, in its primary and elementary principles, the spirit I mean of *self-righteous confidence* towards God. I know well, that there are those amongst Friends, who will disown this temper of mind, and confess themselves, with the truest humility, debtors to mercy alone, through the merits, the sacrifice, and the intercession of the Redeemer. But such, I am inclined to think, will go along with me in lamenting the prevalence of it, to no inconsiderable extent, in the body to which they belong. It is far, very far, from being peculiar to Friends. It has its seat in human nature, and the propensity to it is common to them with all others. It is well to bear in remembrance, that, if this state of mind be cherished, our Christian profession, according to the unequivocal and frequent testimony of the Scriptures, is vain.

The heart is not right with God; nor is any outward obedience, springing from such a state of heart, acceptable in God's sight. There is not a little truth in the saying, quoted by Dr Cox as that of an ancient father, that "there is no heresy in which, taken "as a whole, there is not more of truth than error. "So there might be more of food than poison in a "fatal dish, in which, *but for the food*, the poison "would never be tasted: still, the poison is more "than sufficient to kill; and is the food then an advantage?"* If there be one thing which, more than

* "Cox's Quakerism not Christianity, &c.," page 149. For my general opinion of the voluminous Work to which I have thus referred, I may direct the reader to a Review of the Beacon in the Scottish Congregational Magazine for March, 1835. I thus avow myself the writer of that article. It has been since reprinted in a Pamphlet, consisting of "Extracts from Periodical Works on the Controversy amongst the Society of Friends;" and its contents have come under the censorship of an anonymous writer, in a publication entitled "Truth vindicated, being an Appeal to the Light of Christ within, and to the Testimony of Holy Scripture, by way of answer to said Pamphlet."—It is no more than justice to the writer of that little Work, to say, that he is, in his principles, a consistent Quaker, standing up decidedly for the "good old way" of Fox, and Penn, and Barclay, and for the paramount authority of the "inward light" as the fundamental article of the system; and denouncing "the Beacon," with all who adopt its sentiments,—and I should violate my conscience were I to say without reason,—as abandoning the original and distinctive principles of Quakerism.—I may have occasion to notice this publication, perhaps, again. At present I have only to advert for a moment to a charge which the author is pleased to bring against me,—the charge of great inconsistency,

any other, according to the Scriptures, mars whatever has the appearance and reputation of goodness, it is *the spirit of self-righteousness*. Till that is effectually eradicated, all is wrong. It is not the spirit

and imprudence, and “mistaken kindness,” in having, “with my own hand,” contributed to foster that “spirit of Pharisaical self-estimation” by an unsolicited testimony to “their high average character, as a body, for truth and integrity, for simplicity and humanity;”—for having “by any adulatory remarks, ministered to that spirit which makes them more solicitous to maintain their reputation in the world, than humbly to approve themselves to their Divine Master.” Page 17.—He considers the bestowment of such commendation very much at variance with the “wakeful and solicitous apprehension” expressed by me for their (the Friends’) spiritual danger,—and with my avowal of being “alive to their spiritual interests, and regretting the errors of their religious system.”—I can only now plead *Not guilty* to the charge. I deny that *commendation* and *adulation* are synonymous terms. I deny that it is inconsistent with the *solicitude* professed to *commend*, however much it may be so to *flatter*. If the commendation be deserved, the bestowment of it is no more than what is necessary to impart weight to any accompanying reprehension or censure, by giving a right impression of the spirit by which it is dictated. I am borne out in this by the example of the Apostle of the Gentiles; by whom, on various occasions, due commendation is mingled with merited reproof. I ask this staunch and apparently honest Friend, whether he would have thought me acting fairly and generously, were I to have withheld all commendation for really existing good, and to have administered nothing but unmingled censure? I cannot, in most instances, commend his own logic; nor can I, in all instances, commend his temper; but I do commend his honesty, and his manly and unblenching avowal of his principles,—even although I conceive them to be as ill-supported by him, as they are in themselves unscriptural. I should think it wrong in me, to say

of a sinner ; nor can it, in a sinner, be tolerated by the God with whom he has to do. A sinner must be a debtor to mercy ; and an humble sense of obligation to mercy through a divine Mediator is the primary and germinating principle of the renewed character,—of the life of evangelical obedience.

When I had formed the resolution to address you, and set myself, with that view, to a more studious examination of the principles of your Society, I experienced an increase rather than a diminution of a difficulty which, in common with others, I had previously felt,—the difficulty, namely, of ascertaining, with any definitiveness, what these principles are.—I do not complain of your having no *Creed*, no *Confession of Faith*, no *Thirty-nine Articles*. There are other bodies of professing Christians who have none, besides you. My own is one of them. But in these bodies, there exists no such difficulty as the one I have mentioned ; or, if it must be admitted to exist,

the one of these things, and not the other.—And, as to the commendation, for which he censures me, contributing to the very evil which I profess to deplore,—I have only to put it to himself, whether it would have been possible for me to state the danger, without stating the fact in which it originated. The danger arose, in a great degree, from the very possession of the character ; and the only course I could follow, consistently with truth and candour, and all right feeling, was to state the truth, and to admonish of the danger,—to commend in kindness, and to warn in faithfulness.

it is to nothing like the extent to which it prevails in the Society of Friends. The fact is undeniable; and is it not of itself sufficient evidence of the comparatively little regard that is shown amongst you to religious sentiments, or the articles of a man's belief, provided there be a due adherence to what are emphatically called your *Testimonies*?—I have felt it a matter of no easy determination, how far I should regard the writings of the principal authors connected with the body in the light of accredited standards of its religious views:—then, in points on which such authors differ from each other, which is the authority I ought to prefer:—still further, from the unsatisfactory and sometimes contradictory manner in which the question—how far, and in what sense, the Scriptures are to be regarded as a test of truth—is treated by them, I have been puzzled what to think; this being affirmed by one, half affirmed by a second, and denied by a third,—and affirmed, and half affirmed, and denied, in succession, even by the same individual:—and last of all, some of your principles have been involved by their expounders in such a mist of mysticism, or in themselves are so much characterized by that attribute, that it becomes difficult to discern them at all, or at least to distinguish, with any thing approaching to precision, their forms and dimensions.

There are, however, some leading points, which,

whether, in these our days,—(days which not a few of you, I believe, regard as days of degeneracy and defection from true primitive Quakerism,) they are definitely understood among yourselves or not, are yet, in common parlance, considered as Quaker tenets; and they are, at all events, points on which a correct understanding is a matter of supreme, I had almost said of *infinite*, importance:—and when the results connected with them are contemplated, I might use the term without incurring, even from Friends themselves, the exemplary patterns of correct and measured expression, the charge of going beyond “the words of truth and soberness.”—I refer especially to the primary authority of the inward light, —and to the secondary authority of the Holy Scriptures. I do not, I presume, go too far, when I speak of the former of these,—from which indeed the latter is but a corollary, and hardly different from itself,—as *the foundation principle of Quakerism*; by a general renunciation of which, the Society, even were it to keep together, would be divested entirely of its original and primitive character,—and, though retaining its designation, would be disowned, with tears of shame and sorrow, as backsliding and apostate, by every one of its hitherto venerated founders and fathers.—It is plain, that, until these points are settled, there is no common basis for the discussion and decision of any other. Nay, more than this,—you

cannot but be sensible, to what an extent the authority of some of your other peculiarities of sentiment and usage is involved in that of the “light within.” In my apprehension, *Quakerism* and the *inward light* may be justly viewed as identically the same, and as standing or falling together. In reading the writings of Friends,—with the exception of some of their more modern leaders, who discover in their statements a much greater degree of rational and scriptural simplicity,—there is an incessant recurrence of this light—this universal, saving, inward light; and in such a variety of forms does it present itself, that one is greatly at a loss what to make of it. It is *reason*,—it is *conscience*,—it is *grace*,—it is *the Word of God*,—it is *Christ*,—it is *the Spirit*,—it is *God*,—it is a *principle*,—a *seed*, a *substance*, in which *the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, dwells*:—it is *natural*,—it is *supernatural*,—it *mediates*,—it *propitiates*,—it *justifies*,—it *sanctifies*,—it is, in theory and in effect, *the whole of salvation*. These various representations of the “light within” might be substantiated from the writings of your accredited and most esteemed leaders.—I cannot but feel, therefore, that, in taking up this subject, I am taking up the essence of Quakerism; and that no inconsiderable proportion of the points of difference, both in sentiment and in practice, by which your Society is distinguished from other denominations, may find a place for appropri-

ate notice in the course of its illustration. Not that it is my intention to touch upon all of these. By no means. This would require a large volume. I shall confine myself to two or three leading articles, of which the connexion with the inward light is the most immediate.

It is my wish to write freely and kindly. My respect for you is most sincere ; but I should be unworthy of any return of that respect on your part, if my respect for *truth* were not still greater. We ought to cherish the conviction, and invariably to act upon it, that we cannot do each other a more valuable service, than that of displacing error from each other's minds, and substituting truth.—In the controversies at present in agitation amongst you, and which have been chiefly kindled by the “Beacon” light, it has grieved me not a little to perceive so much solicitude about the question, whether this and the other publication contain what is *according to Quakerism*. The principal, nay, in one view, the sole inquiry ought to be, whether they contain what is *according to truth* ? What is the one question, compared with the other ? There is not a greater danger to the mind, in its investigation of truth, than an excessive veneration for names. We cannot bear to think of finding those whom we thus venerate to have been in the wrong ; and especially, if they have evinced their own sincerity, and increased our reverential attachment, by sufferings endured

for their opinions and practices. But, my respected friends, ought we to be more solicitous to find *them* in the right, than to find *God* in the right? It is not the mind of Fox, or Penn, or Barclay, we should, on any subject be anxious to ascertain:—it is the mind of God. In the preface to Mr W. Newton's "Remonstrance to the Society of Friends," I find the following statement:—"In a meeting which was held
 "at the late annual conference of the Society of
 "Friends in London, and intended especially for the
 "instruction of the young, their attention was directed
 "to the example of Penn, Barclay, and other ancient
 "Friends; and it was said by one of their ministers,
 "that those who did not follow the principles laid
 "down by them,—'who found any thing in the
 "'Scriptures which they had not found, were out of
 "'the narrow way, and were going in a tract which
 "'led to the same point with the broad way, and that
 "'was destruction.'"—This minister possibly might mean no more, than that he himself was so fully convinced of the sentiments of Penn and Barclay being the Gospel, that he regarded all who dissented from them as departing from the Gospel, and in consequent danger of perdition. But, assuming the correctness of the statement, I hope there are few amongst you who will not agree with me in thinking that he "spoke unadvisedly with his lips." Nothing could be more mischievous, than thus to throw the minds of either

old or young into the fetters of implicit faith in human infallibility ;—the infallibility too of men, who differed from each other, who occasionally differed from themselves, who differed still more from some of the modern leaders of Quakerism, and, what is of most importance, who differed, I apprehend, in no trivial degree, from the apostles and prophets of the Lamb.

The author of the “ Beacon ” makes his appeal directly to the Scriptures, as the only standard by which he will consent to be tried,—because, in his estimation, the only authoritative test of religious truth. The question is—*Is he right in this ?* If another question is to be interposed—*Does he speak according to Barclay ?*—let it be distinctly understood, that the object of interposing this question is, not to ascertain whether he speaks *truth*, but whether he speaks *genuine Quakerism*. The questions, whether Isaac Crewdson be *in the right*, and whether Isaac Crewdson be *a true Quaker*, are essentially distinct. To identify them, is to assume the infallible rectitude of Quakerism, and to settle every controversy by appeal to human authority. I do not question the right of the religious body to which the writer of the Beacon belongs, to press upon him the latter of the two inquiries. Every Christian community is, without doubt, entitled to say to each of its members, respecting any sentiments he may be

pleased to publish,—“ These may be your opinions ; they may be according to your views of the Scriptures :—but they are not the opinions of our body ; —and if you hold them, consistency and duty require, not that you trouble and distract the body, but that you withdraw from it.”—But while I grant this, it should surely be also admitted, that a man may, by various bonds,—both bonds of nature and bonds of grace,—be attached to a particular community; that he may still see not a little in it which he esteems good, and worthy of being preserved and cherished; and that he may be reluctant to break his connexion, and anxious, in the first instance, to do his utmost for the rectification of what is wrong; that so, should the issue be the necessity of withdrawment on his part, or exclusion on the part of the Society, he may, in either case, have “ a conscience void of offence,” as having “ done what he could.” Genuine affection may thus be the instigator to disturbance. If the peace that prevails have not its basis in truth, the sooner it is unsettled the better. There cannot be a desire more purely the dictate of genuine love, than the desire to lead the objects of that love from error to truth;—and if, the moment we deem them in error, we unceremoniously abandon them, the haste of relinquishment, being naturally interpreted as indicating the slightness of attachment, may diminish, if not even destroy and invert, the influence of our counsel.

Controversy is not in itself desirable ; but it may be necessary ; and even those who are least inclined to it may feel this “ necessity laid upon them ” by a paramount sense of duty,—duty to truth, duty to God, duty to their erring friends. The God of peace is the God of truth ; and there may be a peace which, as the God of truth, he disowns. In the spiritual world, as in the physical, stagnation may be more perilous than tempest. The agitating storm of controversy may at times be requisite, to purify the atmosphere of Zion from its insidiously gathering, and silently death-spreading *miasmata*. Every thing depends on the tempers of mind in which controversy is conducted :—and it should not be forgotten, that, while “ the meekness and gentleness of Christ ” is needful on the one hand, openness to light and conviction is no less indispensable on the other. I have already adverted to the danger of an excessive deference to human authority and to venerated names. May the Spirit of truth preserve you from such a state of mind as that which Dr Hancock expresses, when he writes thus respecting the author of the Beacon :—“ But I hope he will never be so far self-deceived, as to propose to himself such an unattainable object, as that of convincing the serious, weighty, and reflecting members of the Society, that they do not know their own doctrines, or that Scripture is against them ; and that for nearly two

“hundred years, they have been supporting a weak
 “and brittle testimony, with the loss of life, and of
 “liberty, and of property, in favour of principles
 “which are now found to be delusive and pernicious
 “errors.” *—This is to be proof against conviction.
 It is not to open the eyes, but to shut them,—to
 “wink hard” against the admission of light. When
 a writer deprecates the idea of Friends “moving one
 “single step from any of their testimonies, to meet
 “their fellow-christians of other denominations,” and
 assigns his reason for it in these terms—“Because
 “we believe that the standard we have adopted is a
 “*fixed* one, and that as it is, we apprehend, not of
 “our own, but of divine appointment, therefore we
 “cannot change it,” †—he evidently assumes the very

* Defence of the Doctrines of immediate Revelation, &c.,
 pages 15, 16.

† Ibid. page 79.—Having thus adverted to Dr Hancock’s Defence, I take the opportunity of saying, that, in my apprehension, he has been far from doing justice to the author of the Beacon, but is chargeable, in his treatment of him, with a violation of the most imperative claims of charity. When he says, page 1, “If I am not mistaken, there is a *covert* attack upon
 “the fundamental principles of the Society, though *the object is*
 “*held out by the author to be a very different one,*”—he imputes to him an insincerity, of which the amiable writer, I am very sure, was most unconscious:—and when he adds, as his own vindication for assailing his Work,—“to suffer such an attack to
 “pass unnoticed from a quarter, in which age, and character,
 “and station, must give it the greater weight, scarcely seems to
 “be the duty of any one who has a firm belief in the truth of

point in debate, the “divine appointment” of the Quaker standard, whilst, at the same time, he leaves the questions to be asked, what that standard is, and on what description of evidence he rests the infallible

“our testimonies, and a desire to see them more generally established”—he seems to have forgotten that “*age, and character, and station,*” ought the more to have commanded his respect, and to have screened their possessor from surmises so injurious. Yet they are repeatedly introduced. “There is evidently considerable address, in stating some of his propositions *so warily* “as not positively to announce such a denial”—page 5:—in the same page he speaks of “*oblique insinuations;*” in page 15, of his taking “another occasion” from a particular passage of Scripture “for *covertly* calling in question the doctrine of universal “saving light;” and, in pages 24, 25, of the terms “mysticism,” “quietism,” and “a religion of feelings,” used by the author, as “evidently *traps laid to catch the feet of the unwary,*” and expresses his belief that “none of the firm, and sound, and weighty members of Christ’s church amongst the Friends will be *entangled in the snare, or drawn away by the specious stratagem.*” —Now to me it appears, that, if ever sentiments were propounded clearly and honestly, they are so in the Beacon. They are any thing but ambiguous. And of this Dr H. seems himself at times to be sensible; for in the very page in which he speaks of his “*covertly* calling in question the doctrine of universal “saving light,” he speaks also of “the author’s *avowed* opinion of the paramount authority of Scripture, paramount, I mean, to that of the light of Christ in the soul;” and whereas, in one of the pages referred to, he talks of “snares” and “specious stratagems,” he, in another—page 76—represents “the tendency of “the Beacon as, in his view, *very decided.*”—That the sentiments propounded in the Beacon are in opposition to some of the fundamental principles of genuine Quakerism, it would be hypocrisy in me to attempt denying. But I do deny that they are propounded covertly, insnaringly, or with any portion of

and immutable certainty of all its articles. According to Dr H., the Friends' Testimony has been maintained for two hundred years. I presume that, in saying so, he refers not merely to any one or more

malus animus. I conceive there is abundant internal evidence in the little work itself, of a deeply pious and sincere desire after truth,—evidence, both of a sound mind and an honest heart.

Thus much I feel myself called upon to say in behalf of the author of the Beacon. I do not, however, consider myself authorized, by either the rules of propriety or the dictates of expediency, to enter here into any discussion of the public steps which the Society, by their yearly and quarterly committees, have thought it their duty to adopt, in regard to the book and its author. Although in possession of materials which might enable me to do so, I should, in making such a use of them, only embroil myself in a disputation about rules and modes of procedure, and the respective rights of religious communities and their individual members, instead of a controversy about important *principles of truth*. It is with these I have to do. Regarding the other I shall only say, that I can, by no means, approve, either of the attempts made to induce the author to suppress the Beacon, or of the subsequent silencing of his ministry. The former, while it involved a tampering with conscience, and a fettering of free discussion, implied also the strange inconsistency of allowing him to *hold* his opinions, provided he would *keep them to himself* for the future, and avow repentance for having given them publicity:—whereas the opinions, being evidently on momentous and fundamental points, were either (laying aside the question of their truth or falsehood) consistent with sound Quakerism, or they were not;—if they were, why should they be suppressed?—and if they were not, suppression should not have been enough;—the author should have been required to *disown* them, or to *relinquish his connexion with the Society*, as holding sentiments subversive of its leading principles. To have been satisfied with suppression, would have been to be satisfied

of their peculiar views and practices, but also to the great principles of their system. Does he, then, conceive, that the two centuries which have elapsed since their adoption and promulgation by George Fox are a sufficient guarantee for their truth? If he does, we may well ask him, why they were then embraced. If at the time they were embraced, they were, in any of their articles, new, then they were different from what had been held during a much longer term of prescription. Two centuries form but a ninth part of what is past of the Christian era. The principles, therefore, which were previously professed, had a guarantee eight times surer than that now pleaded for them; and Isaac Crewdson is eight

with dishonesty;—it would have been a constraining of him to “hold the truth in unrighteousness,” and, on the part of the Society, a toleration of error, and a sacrificing, or at least a compromising, of important truth, for the sake of a merely apparent and nominal unity.—As to the silencing of his ministry, while it was liable to all the same objections, it seemed also to involve the *inconsistency* of subjecting the ministry to the authority of man,—of bringing the sentiments taught to some test different from that of direct manifestation,—and thus of interfering with the Spirit of God, or admitting that his dictates in one minister might be inconsistent with his dictates in others;—and, along with this, the *partiality* of silencing in one the preaching of doctrines which were acknowledged by others, of deserved eminence, to be, in almost all their essential elements, in harmony with their own.—Consistency would have required the suppression of other writings than the Beacon, and the silencing of other ministries than that of Isaac Crewdson.

times less to blame in venturing to differ from George Fox, than George Fox was in presuming to dissent from all before him. But, indeed, we should protest against all such calculations. The longer sentiments have been held, it is true, and the more numerous and respectable the names with which the profession of them stands associated, self-diffidence should render us the more cautious and considerate in impugning them. But still, there is no period of prescription by which error can be transmuted into truth,—no term, however long, that can bring us under an obligation to believe it.—The question now before us is, whether there be any authentic and permanent standard of religious truth and duty; and, if there be, what it is. To this question, with a special reference to the peculiar sentiments of Friends, I shall beg your attention in my next letter.

Meantime believe me,

Yours very respectfully,

R. W.

LETTER II.

ON THE STANDARD OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH AND DUTY.

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

THE question to which this and probably another letter may be devoted, is, as I have already hinted, one of primary importance,—one, without the settlement of which it is impossible, with the smallest satisfaction, to move a single step in our inquiries after truth. I feel that I have no room to set down my foot, till we have come to some agreement here. I cannot reason with you, till we have some common principles as to the test by which our respective positions are to be tried, and truth to be ascertained. And indeed this very question is one, and a principal one too, of the articles of difference between us.—I come, then, at once to the point. I affirm THE PRIMARY AND PARAMOUNT AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, as the only reasonable ground on which we can conduct any of our discussions,—their SUPREMACY, and their COMPLETENESS, as the standard of truth and duty in all matters of

religion.—Here we are at issue. You deny my position. You affirm that there is another and a superior standard or rule,—called by you the “INWARD LIGHT,” or “LIGHT WITHIN,”—a phrase which, as I have before noticed, is used by your writers in strangely various though analogous senses, but which I may here, it is presumed, understand as meaning THE HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF IN HIS IMMEDIATE SUGGESTIONS TO THE MIND.—This you regard as primary, and the Scriptures as secondary.

Distinct conceptions are here of essential moment. The manner in which some of your leading authorities have treated this subject, discovers at times an extraordinary confusion of ideas, and contradictoriness of statement; so that when at one time I have fancied I had got almost as much admitted as I could wish in behalf of the authority of the Scriptures, I have not proceeded far, till I have found the admission so qualified as in fact to nullify its meaning and its worth.—There is, moreover, on this as on other points, so much of what is true and excellent mixed up with what is false and pernicious; so much that is true in one sense of the terms, but not true in another; and so much that is true to a certain point, but loses the attribute of truth by the excess to which it is driven; that, to me at least, it has been a task of no small perplexity, to winnow the false from the true, and to know with certainty what I should re-

ceive as the doctrine of Friends, and what not. There is Jesuitism to be found elsewhere than in the Church of Rome. Socinians have many a time exposed themselves to the charge of employing the terms of truth in such a way as to convey the essential elements of error. I would not impute this unworthy artifice to any of your writers: but I have no alternative between this imputation and that of confused conceptions. It is always a suspicious symptom of the correctness of any doctrine, when it cannot be stated in explicit terms, and the plain import of these terms sustained throughout the discussion of it with unequivocal consistency.

To avoid confusion, I shall take up the doctrine relative to the authority of the Scriptures, as taught by BARCLAY,—leaving any notice of the difference between him and others to a future opportunity. And I shall begin with an exemplification, from this writer, of what I mean by using the language of truth to convey error.—After having laid down his second proposition, which affirms the doctrine of immediate divine revelation, independent of, and superior to, not only natural reason but the Holy Scriptures, and possessing, to the mind that receives it, the same certainty as the first truths, that the whole is greater than its part, and that two contradictories can neither be both true, nor both false;—he opens his illustration thus:—“It is very probable that many carnal

“ and natural Christians will oppose this proposition;
 “ who, being wholly unacquainted with the movings
 “ and actings of God’s Spirit upon their hearts, judge
 “ the same nothing necessary; and some are apt to
 “ flout at it as ridiculous:—yea, to that height are
 “ the generality of Christians apostatized and degen-
 “ erated, that, though there be not any thing more
 “ plainly asserted, more seriously recommended, or
 “ more certainly attested, in all the writings of the
 “ Holy Scriptures, yet nothing is less minded or more
 “ rejected, by all sorts of Christians, than *immediate*
 “ *and divine revelation*; insomuch that once to lay
 “ claim to it is a matter of reproach. Whereas of
 “ old, none were judged Christians, but such as *had*
 “ *the Spirit of Christ*, Rom. viii. 9. But now, many
 “ do boldly call themselves *Christians*, who make no
 “ difficulty of confessing they are without it, and
 “ laugh at such as say they have it. Of old they
 “ were accounted *the sons of God who were led by*
 “ *the Spirit of God*, *ibid.* ver. 14. But now, many
 “ aver themselves sons of God, who know nothing of
 “ this leader; and he that affirms himself so led is,
 “ by the pretended orthodox of this age, presently
 “ proclaimed a heretic. The reason hereof is very
 “ manifest, viz. because many in these days, under
 “ the name of *Christians*, do experimentally find that
 “ they are not actuated nor led by God’s Spirit; yea,
 “ many great *doctors, divines, teachers, and bishops,*

“ of Christianity (commonly so called) have wholly
 “ shut their ears from hearing, and their eyes from
 “ seeing, this *inward Guide*, and so are become
 “ strangers unto it; whence they are, by their own
 “ experience, brought to this strait, either to confess
 “ that they are as yet ignorant of God, and have
 “ only the shadow of knowledge, and not the true
 “ knowledge of him, or that this knowledge is ac-
 “ quired without immediate Revelation.”*

I should have little if any hesitation in subscribing to the entire contents of this paragraph. I believe in “ the movings and actings of God’s Spirit upon the heart.” In a certain sense, I believe in “immediate and divine revelation :”—that is, I believe, that, in a way which we do not understand, and are warned against expecting to understand (John iii. 8.), the Holy Spirit operates upon the human mind, in imparting to it the *spiritual discernment* of the truth, excellence, suitableness, and glory, of *the testimony of the Gospel contained in the Scriptures*;—so operates, as that, by the experience of the influence of this testimony, the enlightened subject of it comes to have “ the witness in himself” of its divine original. And this spiritual discernment may, in a modified sense, be called the *revealing* of Christ to the mind. But when Barclay applies the terms used by him to

* Barclay’s Apology, &c., pages 19, 20. Edit. London, 1780.

all who do not concur with him in his doctrine of the equal, or rather the superior, authority of immediate and independent revelations to those of the written word,—and *unchristianizes all such*, as coming under the solemn sentence of exclusion—“if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;”—he either deceives himself, or he deceives others; he writes either ignorantly or jesuitically.—In proof of this, observe. By *immediate revelation* he means a revelation independent of the Scriptures,—not the spiritual discovery merely of the excellence of what the Scriptures contain, but a communication by the Spirit to the mind, without and above them. Now, he is quite correct in “distinguishing betwixt the certain “knowledge of God and the uncertain; betwixt the “spiritual knowledge and the literal; the saving “heart-knowledge, and the soaring, airy, head-know- “ledge,”—and in affirming that “the former can be “obtained by no other way than the inward, imme- “diate manifestation and revelation of God’s Spirit, “shining in and upon the heart, enlightening and “opening the understanding.”* This is language which I should have no objection to adopt; but it would be with the explanation, that the word *im- “mediate* should be held as signifying, not that the “manifestation” of the Spirit was *independent of the*

* Ibid. page 20.

written word, but only that the Spirit's operation was *directly upon the sinner's mind*;—and the word “revelation” not as meaning the discovery of new and otherwise unknown doctrines, but the discovery of the truth and excellence of those made known in that word. This, however, is not the view of the case intended by Barclay:—and therefore, when he goes on to affirm, in unqualified terms, that *this truth* “hath been acknowledged by some of the most refined and famous of all sorts of professors of Christianity, in all ages;” “who being truly upright-hearted and earnest seekers of the Lord,” “and finding a distaste and disgust of all other outward means,” “have at last concluded with *one voice*, “that there was no true knowledge of God, but that “which is revealed inwardly by his own Spirit;”—he writes, I repeat, either ignorantly or jesuitically:—for the fathers and others whom he quotes certainly did not hold the sentiment *as held by him*. They might use terms resembling, or even the same with those which he uses; but it would not have been *in the same sense* in which he uses them. The immediate teaching of the Spirit meant by them, and which they might call revelation, is simply what I have mentioned,—that divine illumination, by which the truth and excellence of the doctrine contained in the gospel testimony are discerned, and its power experienced. As an exemplification of what I mean, I

may select the case of *Luther*. His language, quoted by Barclay, is, that “no man can rightly know God, “or *understand the word of God*, unless he *immediately* receive it from the Holy Spirit; neither can “any one receive it from the Holy Spirit except he “find it by experience in himself; and in this experience the Holy Ghost teacheth as in his own proper school; out of which nothing is taught but “mere talk.”* It is obvious that this is not “revelation,” or “immediate manifestation,” in *Barclay’s sense of the terms*—(if it were, there would be no difference between the Quaker doctrine on this subject and that of evangelical believers of other denominations;)—it is only the spiritual discernment of that truth which, in the word of God, or the Holy Scriptures, is already revealed.

That there is at present, in the Society of Friends, a growing deference to the authority of these Scriptures,—that the disposition is gaining ground to make them the ultimate standard of appeal, in matters of religion,—a comparison of your older with your more recent writers, as well as the progress of existing controversies, will not allow me to doubt; and you must excuse me for saying, that it is with special pleasure I admit the conviction into my mind. The authority of the inspired writings of the Old and

* Ibid. page 23.

New Testament, is a subject respecting which there appears amongst you an indefiniteness, inconsistency, and even contradictoriness of statement, such as would be marvellous, were it not that they are the unavoidable result of what I may call your *double standard*,—your superior and inferior, your primary and secondary rule. I might here quote from writers in the present controversy; but I should then have it objected that these were not your accredited authorities. I therefore prefer Barclay. I may afterwards compare his statements with those of your most highly and justly esteemed author of the present day, Joseph John Gurney; but in the mean time, let us hear him who has, for so long a period, been appealed to as the Oracle of your Society.

In the statement of Proposition II. entitled “Of immediate revelation,” after referring to the “testimony of the Spirit,” as, in all ages, the source of the true knowledge of God, and affirming the continuance still of the same kind of revelation with that given to “patriarchs, prophets, and apostles,”—he says:—“Moreover, these divine inward revelations, “which we make absolutely necessary for the building up of true faith, neither do nor ever can contradict the outward testimony of the Scriptures, or “right and sound reason. Yet from hence it will “not follow, that these divine revelations are to be “subjected to the test, either of the outward testi-

“mony of the Scriptures, or of the natural reason of
 “man, as to a more noble or certain rule or touch-
 “stone; for this divine revelation, and inward illu-
 “mination is that which is evident and clear of itself,
 “forcing, by its own evidence and clearness, the
 “well-disposed understanding to assent, irresistibly
 “moving the same thereunto, even as the common
 “principles of natural truths do move and incline the
 “mind to a natural assent,—as, *that the whole is*
 “*greater than its part; that two contradictories can*
 “*neither be both true nor both false.*” *—In the state-
 ment of Proposition III. “Concerning the Scrip-
 tures,”—after enumerating, under three heads, his-
 tory, prophecy, and doctrine, the contents of the
 sacred volume, he proceeds thus:—“Nevertheless,
 “because they are only a declaration of the Foun-
 “tain, and not the fountain itself, therefore they are
 “not to be esteemed the principal ground of all truth
 “and knowledge, nor yet the adequate primary rule
 “of faith and manners. Yet, because they give a
 “true and faithful testimony of the first foundation,
 “they are and may be esteemed a secondary rule,
 “subordinate to the Spirit, from which they have all
 “their excellency and certainty: for as by the inward
 “testimony of the Spirit we do alone truly know
 “them, so they testify, that the Spirit is that guide

* Apol. pages 18, 19.

“ by which the saints are led into all truth ; there-
 “ fore, according to the Scripture, the Spirit is the
 “ first and principal leader. Seeing, then, that we
 “ do therefore receive and believe the Scriptures,
 “ because they proceeded from the Spirit, for the
 “ very same reason is the Spirit more originally and
 “ principally the rule, according to the received
 “ maxim in the schools, *Propter quod unumquodque*
 “ *est tale, illud ipsum est magis tale* : that for which
 “ a thing is such, that thing itself is more such.”*

Now let us, with all seriousness and candour, examine these statements, which being purposely selected from the propositions themselves laid down, *seriatim*, by Barclay, as the points which it is his aim to establish, may be fairly regarded as expressed by him in the most deliberately chosen and carefully weighed terms.—Let the following observations, then, have your ingenuous attention :—

1. The Holy Scriptures are acknowledged as a rule, but not as the only, nor even as the primary rule, of faith and of duty. There is something else that is placed above them. What, then, is it? In the answer to this question there appears a most extraordinary fallacy ; the more extraordinary, from its being so palpable, that one can hardly fancy it to escape the detection even of a child. They are said

* Apol., pages 67, 68.

to be "subordinate to the Spirit," and "the Spirit to be more originally and principally the rule."—But surely the Spirit, personally considered, cannot, in any propriety of speech, be called a rule. There is, I admit, a figurative sense, in which one man may be said to be a rule to another,—his example and authority being meant. In this way, a father may be a rule to his children; and a good man a rule to his dependants, and to all who know and revere his excellencies. But if, when we speak of a father being a rule to his children, we speak figuratively, and mean no more than that his will is that rule; then what consistency would there be in speaking of the father and his will as if they were *two distinct rules*, the one primary and the other secondary? The will of the father, in whatever way indicated, is obviously and properly the rule, not the father himself. This is a truism, scarcely worthy of being put into writing. But if you admit this, you cannot withhold your assent to the same statement, in the parallel case:—it is the will or mind of the Spirit, that is obviously and properly the rule, not the Spirit himself; the will or mind of the Spirit, in whatever way indicated, whether mediately or immediately, whether, that is, through the instrumentality of others, or directly to ourselves. This is, or ought to be, sufficiently clear. For, what is my rule, and what is yours? *My rule is, the recorded intimations of the mind of the Spirit in the*

sacred Scriptures :—this is my primary, my secondary, my only rule ; the only light of my feet, the only lamp of my path ; in following the guidance of which, I do not disown the Spirit's immediate aid,—but earnestly implore that aid, to preserve me from all prejudice and every biasing influence that might hinder me from discerning, or disincline me from pursuing, the prescribed path. *Your* rule is double. Your primary rule, you say, is the Spirit ; your secondary rule, the Scriptures. But when you say that your primary rule is the Spirit, what *do* you mean, or what *can* you mean by the Spirit, but *the immediate intimations of the Spirit to your own minds* ? The rule, in either case, lies in the intimations of the Spirit ; and the difference between us must inevitably resolve itself into this ; that my primary rule is found in the intimations of the Spirit *to prophets and apostles*, while yours is found in the intimations of the Spirit *to yourselves*.—On this subject, Barclay appears to me chargeable with one or other of two things,—a most marvellous confusion of ideas, or the most disingenuous sophistry. He says—“ When we doubt
“ of the streams of any river or flood, we recur to the
“ fountain itself ; and, having found it, there we de-
“ sist ; we can go no farther, because there it springs
“ out of the bowels of the earth, which are inscru-
“ table. Even so, the writings and sayings of all
“ men we must bring to the Word of God, I mean

“the Eternal Word, and if they agree hereunto, we “stand there.”* By “the Word of God,” then, to which, as to a test, “the writings and sayings of all “men” are to be brought, he does not mean what Christians in general so denominate—the Holy Scriptures. On the contrary, the contents of these very Scriptures are included among “the writings and sayings of all men,” which are to be brought to his superior test,—“the Eternal Word,” or, as in the same paragraph he terms it, “the Truth itself;” for he says, “we may not call the Scriptures the principal fountain of all truth and knowledge, nor yet the first “adequate rule of faith and manners; because the “principal fountain of truth must be the Truth itself; “i. e. that whose certainty and authority depends not “upon another.”—Now here, I repeat, is either confusion, or sophistry. Do you not perceive, that the difference between you and us relates not at all to the Fountain of Truth, but to the communications from that Fountain? The simple question is, not whether God, the “Eternal Word,” the “Truth itself,” be the Fountain of truth to us:—who doubts it?—but whether, on the one hand, there are in the Holy Scriptures, such communications from this Fountain as were designed to be the rule—the primary and only rule—of faith and manners,—or

* Apol., page 71.

whether, on the other hand, there are still communications made from this Fountain directly to ourselves, which are the rule of primary authority. It is vain to talk of the Fountain being superior to the streams, and of our bringing every thing to the Fountain. How is this to be done? What is meant by bringing any writing or saying of man to "the Eternal Word"—to "the Truth itself?" Is not this to make the direct communications from the Eternal Word, from the Truth itself, *to my own mind*, the test of that writing or saying? If it means not this, what does it mean? And if it does mean this, then the communications to the mind of each individual are constituted the test of the communications to the mind of every other individual. The mind and will of God can be known in no other way than by some revelation of them; and it is this revelation, not God himself, that must be the test of all that professes to come from the same Source. Where, then, is this revelation? Is it the revelation contained in the Scriptures, or is it the revelation made immediately to the mind now? "The writings and sayings of all men *we* must bring to the Eternal Word." *We* must do it. The upshot of the matter, then, is this. The writings and sayings of the prophets and apostles are amongst the "writings and sayings of all men." There is a higher standard than they, namely, the Spirit by which they spoke and wrote. To this

higher standard Robert Barclay brings the writings and sayings of these “holy men of God.” But Robert Barclay, when he leaves the prophets and apostles, and goes above them to the Spirit Himself, can know the mind of that Spirit in no other way than by direct communication to *his own* mind. If there be any other way, it must be in the regions of mysticism, whither I must decline going to seek it.—But the “writings and sayings of all men” comprehend also the writings and sayings of Robert Barclay himself. I am bound to bring them too, in the same way, to the same test. And so is each reader bound to do with mine. When we speak, therefore, of the Spirit as the primary rule,—seeing this must mean, if it means any thing attainable or even conceivable, the Spirit speaking to the individual, it follows that each individual becomes to himself, in the communications of the Spirit to his own mind, the standard of all that professes to be divine communication to others!—If there is a fallacy here, I do not perceive it. Let us see, then, what consequences follow; and it will be for you to consider whether you are prepared to admit them.

2. The most obvious sequence is, that you place the communications of the Spirit to your own minds *above* the communications of the Spirit to the inspired writers of the Holy Scriptures. You will perhaps deny this, and allege that you only place them on

an equality, admitting that whatever contradicts the Scriptures is, by that very contradiction, proved to be an illusion, and to have no authority. To place the two even on an equality, I might well regard as presumption enough; and I may show this hereafter. But in truth you do more. The Spirit, according to you, is *above* the Scriptures,—as the Author of a book is above the book; as the fountain is above the stream, or above the reservoir which it supplies. But, since the Spirit can be known only by his communications, it must be these communications which form the primary rule, and to which the Scriptures are subordinate. When you wait for the Spirit, and listen to the voice of the Spirit, you wait for his suggestions to your minds,—you listen to his voice as it addresses yourselves. It is, in fact, therefore, to these suggestions and to that voice that you give the designation of the primary rule; and it is to these that the suggestions and voice of the Spirit in the Scriptures are secondary. If this is not placing the intimations of the Spirit *to you* above the intimations of the same Spirit *to the sacred penmen*, I know of no principles that will yield a legitimate conclusion.—It will, therefore, follow further, that it is more reasonable to try the Scriptures by your immediate revelations, than to try the latter by the former. The superior must be the test of the inferior,—the primary of the secondary and subordinate.

And Dr Hancock does indeed go all this length, in consistency with himself and with the principles of primitive Quakerism :—" I cannot admit," he says, " that the Scriptures, divine and excellent as they are, and blessed, I trust, as means auxiliary to salvation, to thousands and millions, are to be placed above the teaching of Christ's Holy Spirit by immediate revelation ; because I dare not, as matter of principle, place the effect above the cause ; in other words, the letter above the Spirit." And again : " I maintain that, in this gospel day, there not only may be, but there is, such a revelation" (*immediate* revelation that is) " and that, as it is from Christ himself, it cannot be made *subservient* to Scripture, though it can never contradict sound, and comprehensive, and impartial interpretation of Holy Scripture."—The same writer avows the sentiment, that the same kind of inspiration, or immediate revelation, which was enjoyed by those holy men who of old were commissioned to convey the mind and will of God to others, has, under the gospel dispensation, come to be possessed, as a common privilege, by all believers. And Barclay interprets one inspired Apostle, as pronouncing the anointing of the Spirit, possessed by Christians universally, a surer test of truth than even that Apostle's own writings.—If these things be so, it necessarily follows, that immediate revelation now may as reasonably be held the test of

Scripture, as Scripture be held the test of immediate revelation ;—nay, the Spirit himself being above the word which he has dictated, the former is the *more* reasonable of the two. We shall see more of this immediately, under next particular.

3. This pretension to immediate revelation,—revelation of the same kind and the same authority with that contained in the Scriptures, has the manifest tendency to reduce the value of these sacred Oracles, and to render them of comparatively little use.—I am well aware, that you will shrink from this conclusion, and indignantly refuse it. I am aware of the high respect expressed for the sacred books by many of your writers, as well as in the Rules of Discipline and Advices, published by authority of your Society, and consisting of extracts from the minutes and epistles of its annual meetings. I am aware, that by Barclay himself there appears at times an admission, in so many words, of the propriety of using the Scriptures as a test of all subsequent revelations. Thus, for example, he writes :—“ In this “ respect above-mentioned, then, we have shown “ what service and use the Holy Scriptures, as managed in and by the Spirit, are of to the Church of “ God ; wherefore, we do account them a secondary “ rule. Moreover, because they are commonly acknowledged by all to have been written by the “ dictates of the Holy Spirit, and that the errors

“ which may be supposed by the injury of times to
 “ have slipt in, are not such but that there is a suffi-
 “ cient clear testimony left to all the essentials of the
 “ Christian faith; we do look upon them as the only
 “ fit outward judge of controversies among Chris-
 “ tians; and that whatsoever doctrine is contrary unto
 “ their testimony may therefore justly be rejected as
 “ false. And for our parts, we are very willing, that
 “ all our doctrines and practices be tried by them;
 “ which we never refused, nor ever shall, in all con-
 “ troversies with our adversaries, as the judge and
 “ test. We shall also be very willing to admit it as
 “ a positive certain maxim, *That whatsoever any do,*
 “ *pretending to the Spirit, which is contrary to the*
 “ *Scriptures, be accounted and reckoned a delusion of*
 “ *the devil,*” &c. &c.*—To this agree the words of
 Mr Gurney :—“ Scripture is a divinely authorized
 “ test, by which we must try not only all our senti-
 “ ments on matters of doctrine, but all our notions
 “ and opinions respecting right and wrong. ‘ To the
 “ law and to the testimony: if they speak not accord-
 “ ing to this word, it is because there is no light in
 “ them.’ ” †—And the sentiments of Friends are sum-
 med up by Evans, in the following terms, chiefly
 those of Barclay as just cited :—“ They receive and

* Apol., pages 85, 86.

† Observations on the distinguishing Views and Practices of
 the Society of Friends, Seventh edit. page 93.

“believe in them as the most authentic and perfect
 “declaration of Christian faith; the only fit outward
 “judge and test of the soundness of doctrine; and
 “they have ever declared their willingness that all
 “their doctrines and principles should be tried by
 “them; and that whatsoever any, who profess to be
 “guided by the Holy Spirit, either believe or do,
 “which is contrary to, or inconsistent with, their
 “divine testimony, should be accounted a delusion.”*

All this, so far as it goes, is well; and the use of such language, along with general eulogies of the Scriptures as “the most excellent writings in the world, to which not only no other writings are to be preferred, but even, in divers respects, not comparable thereto,”—may render it difficult to persuade yourselves, and difficult to convince some others, that there is any thing in the views you hold of immediate revelation that is disparaging to the inspired writings.—But, in spite of all this, we cannot but regard it as in the highest degree disparaging, to speak of the Scriptures, as Barclay does above, in the very paragraph in which he admits them to be a test, as a *secondary rule*. There seems an air of condescension in even assigning them this place, as if it were going quite as far as was warrantable: considering “the service and use they are of to the church

* Exposition of the faith of the Religious Society of Friends, &c., pages 236, 237.

of God — *Wherefore we do account them a secondary rule?*” There is the same air of condescending courtesy, when elsewhere, in answering the objection, “whether he does not hereby render the Scriptures altogether uncertain, or useless,” he says—“Not at all. The proposition itself declares how much I esteem them; and, provided that to the Spirit from which they came be but granted that place the Scriptures themselves give it, *I do freely concede to the Scriptures the second place*, even whatsoever they say of themselves, &c.”—But what, I repeat, is the meaning of “granting to the Spirit that place which the Scriptures themselves give it?” The meaning is, that the Spirit himself is the primary rule. But in such a proposition, we have seen, the Spirit himself cannot signify the Spirit personally; it can signify nothing else than *immediate revelation*. It is this immediate revelation that is the primary rule, and that takes precedence of the Holy Scriptures, while to them, is “freely conceded” the second or subordinate place! Is this to honour the Scriptures? I cannot but regard all the complimentary terms you can bestow upon these writings, as—I will not say *hypocritical*,—but unmeaning and worthless, so long as you hold the sentiment of their being subordinate and secondary to your own immediate revelations. It is vain to call this honouring the Spirit: it is honouring yourselves: it is placing

the dictates of the Spirit to you above the dictates of the Spirit to the Scripture writers. Barclay says—and he says it when he is speaking of the Holy Scriptures, of the place they hold and the uses they serve—“For though God doth principally and chiefly
 “lead us by his Spirit, yet he sometimes conveys to
 “us his comfort and consolation through his children,
 “whom he raises up and inspires to speak or write a
 “word in season, whereby the saints are made in-
 “struments in the hands of the Lord to strengthen
 “and encourage one another, which doth also tend
 “to perfect and make them wise unto salvation; and
 “such as are led by the Spirit cannot neglect, but
 “do naturally love, and are wonderfully cherished
 “by, that which proceedeth from the same Spirit in
 “another; because such mutual emanations of the
 “heavenly life tend to quicken the mind, when at
 “any time it is overtaken with heaviness. Peter
 “himself declares this to have been the end of his
 “writing, 2 Pet. i. 12, 13. ‘Wherefore I will not be
 “negligent to put you always in remembrance of
 “these things, though ye know them, and be estab-
 “lished in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet,
 “as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up
 “by putting you in remembrance.

“God is teacher of his people himself; and there
 “is nothing more express than that such as are un-
 “der the new covenant *need no man to teach them*;

“yet it was a fruit of Christ’s ascension to send
 “teachers and pastors for perfecting of the saints.
 “So that the same work is ascribed to the Scriptures
 “as to teachers; the one to make the man of God
 “perfect, the other for the perfecting of the saints.
 “—As, then, teachers are not to go before the teach-
 “ing of God himself under the new covenant, but to
 “follow after it, neither are they to rob us of that
 “great privilege which Christ hath purchased unto
 “us by his blood: so neither is the Scripture to go
 “before the teaching of the Spirit, or to rob us of
 “it.”*

Here comes out the truth,—the marrow of your
 system on the present point. For here we have—1.
 The communications of the Spirit in the Scripture
 writers placed on the same level, in authority and in
 use, with those communications now, “whereby the
 saints are made instruments in the hand of the Lord
 to strengthen and encourage one another;” such
 communications, equally with those of the Scriptures,
 coming from such of God’s children as he still “raises
 up and inspires to speak or write a word in season:”
 —2. Ordinary teachers placed on the same level with
 prophets and apostles, and the writings of the latter
 made to occupy the same subordination to the sup-
 posed new covenant privilege of immediate revela-

* Apol. pages 83, 84.

tion, with the lessons and exhortations of the former; so that the Scriptures have no other and no higher use than that of the addresses, written or spoken, of ministers now,—the use namely, of helping forward the influence of immediate revelation in ourselves, this being superior to both :—3. The Holy Scriptures quoted, to disprove the necessity of their own instructions :—“ God is teacher of his people himself ”—that is, directly, by the immediate communications of his Spirit—“ and nothing can be more express than that such as are under the new covenant *need no man to teach them.* ” Is not this to declare new covenant believers, and that on the authority of Scripture itself, independent of Scripture teaching? Does it not follow from this, that the chief lesson taught by the New Testament Scriptures, is the lesson that they themselves, though useful, are not necessary? And can any lesson be conceived more directly calculated to discourage the study of them? Can any thing tend more to produce neglect of them, than to tell a man that he can do without them,—that he has a higher teacher than they, by whom he is rendered independent of them? I appeal to yourselves, if this be not the inevitable tendency of such a principle? If I believe the Scriptures not only to have been “ given by inspiration of God,” but to contain a complete revelation of the divine mind and will, and to be the only source of authentic and saving

instruction in divine things, I then value them accordingly ; I feel the necessity of “ searching them as for hidden treasures ;” I say of them, “ The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver,”—“ O how love I thy law ! It is my meditation all the day.” But if I once admit the conception, that the Scriptures are not to me the only fountain of truth ; that there is another and a higher from which I may draw directly and independently of them,—even the fountain from which they have themselves been derived ;—that moment, the *necessity* for the study of them ceases to be felt, and the force of the inducement to it is proportionally paralyzed. They become a mere collection of streams, from the same source whence other streams, equally sacred, flow directly to myself. They become mere helps to a higher teacher ; and who will choose going to the usher or monitor, when he can have his lessons immediately from the Head Master ?

But what then, you may perhaps ask,—what will you make of the explicit declaration quoted by Barclay from the Apostle John—“ *Ye need not that any man teach you ?*”—I must answer, after the manner of some old divines, in the first place, *negatively* ; and the negative answer, indeed, should, in such a case, be sufficient. Whatever it does mean, there is one thing which it plainly cannot mean ; and that is

the very thing which, to be at all to Barclay's purpose, it would require to mean;—it cannot mean that they stood in need of no further instruction:—for if this were the meaning, how could it be made to comport with the very fact of John's addressing to them the epistle where the words stand? Why does he write to them? Is it not to “teach and admonish” them? It cannot, then, mean this.—Neither can it mean, that the knowledge which they already possessed—the knowledge of the facts and doctrines of the Gospel—had come to each and all of them by direct communication from the Spirit of truth, without the intervention of any human teacher. That neither the words quoted, nor those in the same context—“Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things”—have any such meaning as this,—John himself puts beyond a doubt by expressly affirming the contrary: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the word of life—(for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and *bear witness*, and *show unto you* that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)—that which we have seen and heard *declare we unto you*, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” Chap. i. 1—3.—They re-

ceived their knowledge, then, both of the facts and truths of the Gospel, from the testimony, or witness-bearing, of the Apostles :—that which they knew, had been declared unto them by others.—The meaning, then, seems to be this. It was in connexion with “the truth as it is in Jesus,” that they had received the “unction from the Holy One.” The truth was imparted to them by the commissioned teachers; and the anointing of the Spirit came along with it, enlightening their minds to discern its divine excellence, and giving them, in its felt influence upon their hearts, the experimental evidence of its divine origin and authority. “I have not written unto you,” says John, “because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.” They so knew the truth, spiritually and experimentally, under divine teaching, that they might well be proof against the seducing influence of new and false instructors,—the instructors whom he designates by the general name of Antichrist.—These teachers came to them with doctrines of their own. But they needed no such instructors. The gospel of the Apostles, (“our gospel,” says Paul) “had come to them, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance :”—having “heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation,” and “having believed in Christ” of whom it testified, “they had been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” By

this “unction from the Holy One,” they “knew the certainty of those things wherein they had been instructed;” they “had the witness in themselves.” To listen to other teachers, was to doubt the testimony of God, who had accompanied his own truth with the most unequivocal evidence. So that, instead of listening to “those that seduced them,” they had good reason to act as John enjoins in his second epistle—“If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine,” (the “doctrine of Christ” delivered by Apostles,) “receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed.” There were some who had “gone out from” the communion of Apostles and Christians, and had thus shown that “they were not of them :”—but he was “persuaded better things” of them to whom he wrote—persuaded, that, having the anointing of the Spirit abiding in them, they would not hearken to the counsel that causeth to err from the way of knowledge, but would “continue in the Son and in the Father.”—But, make of John’s language what you will, it is enough for my present purpose to have shown, that it can neither mean that they had received their knowledge immediately from the Spirit, nor that all farther instructions were superfluous; inasmuch as both of these things stand contradicted by the Apostle himself in the very epistle where the words are found.

Of the tendency of the doctrine of immediate

revelation, or inward light, to depreciate the Scriptures, we have an exemplification, which, to my mind, is very shocking, in the manner in which Barclay speaks of the use made by the Apostle Paul of the Old Testament writings, in his communings with the Jews. He is answering the objection to his doctrine, (the doctrine that the Scriptures are not the primary rule and test of truth) drawn from what is said of the Bereans, that, when Paul preached to them, “they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so.” His third reply to the objection is—“If this commendation of the Jewish Bereans might infer that the Scriptures were the only and principal rule to try the Apostle’s doctrine by, what should become of the Gentiles?”—who were not previously, like the Jews, believers in the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures; so that an appeal to these Scriptures could not be supposed to have any weight with them. Now, although the Apostle does not omit this description of evidence even with Gentiles, —for it is to Gentiles he says—“I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you—that Christ died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day *according to the Scriptures* ;”—yet I readily grant, he does in general reason differently with Jews and with Gentiles :—with the former, “out of the

Scriptures;”—with the latter, on principles taught by the light of natural reason and conscience. But what shall we say of the following comparison? “Now certainly the principal and only rule is not different; one to the Jews, and another to the Gentiles; but is universal, reaching both; though secondary and subordinate rules may be various, and diversely suited, according as the people they are used to are stated and circumstantiated: even so we see that the Apostle to the Athenians used a testimony of one of their own poets, which he judged would have credit with them; and no doubt such testimonies, whose authors they esteemed, had more weight with them than all the sayings of Moses and the prophets, whom they neither knew, nor would have cared for. Now, because the Apostle used the testimony of a poet to the Athenians, will it therefore follow he made that the principal or only rule to try his doctrine by? So neither will it follow, that though he made use of the Scripture to the Jews, as being a principle already believed by them, to try his doctrine, that from thence the Scriptures may be accounted the principal or only rule.”*—Is it come to this!—that Paul’s reasoning with the Jews from the Old Testament Scriptures, no more implies his acknow-

* Ibid. page 90.

ledging these writings as the rule or test by which he consented his doctrine should be tried,—than his quoting with approbation a saying of the Athenian Menander implies his acknowledging as such a rule or test the testimony of that heathen poet! Assuredly, when Paul “reasoned with the Jews out of the Scriptures” in proof of his two leading positions,—“that the Christ was to suffer and to rise from the dead, and that Jesus whom he preached to them was the Christ,”—he proceeded upon the assumption, that if his doctrine did not agree with the typical and prophetic intimations of these Scriptures, it had no title to be received as true, and his unbelieving countrymen were justified in rejecting it. Surely this was admitting the Old Testament Scriptures to be a legitimate test of his doctrine. Who questions that? you may say: that which we insist on is, their not being the *only* or the *primary* test. I answer, if by a test is to be understood merely an *evidence of truth*, then certainly they were not the only test. There were other proofs of the divinity of Paul’s doctrine; and to them, perhaps, as being more direct and immediate, the epithet of “primary” might even more appropriately be applied. I allude to the *miracles*, by which the divinity of his commission, and the truth of his message, were alike attested. But if by a test is meant a legitimate or authorized *standard of comparison*, by their conformity or discon-

formity to which other things are to be tried; then I must insist upon it, that in this sense, the Old Testament Scriptures were both the primary and the only test. What other was there? The *light within*, says Barclay, the *universal light*,—the same to both Jews and Gentiles. But if the inward light was the primary test, how came it that, with the Jews, Paul made his appeal, always to the secondary, and never to the primary? And with regard to the Gentiles, what is this inward light? Is it simply reason, or is it the direct illumination of the Spirit,—immediate revelation? If it be reason, we may well ask, has God indeed constituted the reason of fallen man the standard, the primary standard, of his own truth! Has not the reason of fallen man, in its application to the things of God, proved itself, in all ages and in all places, to be foolishness? Is not the light that is in him darkness? And are we to regard as the divinely sanctioned standard of religious truth, a principle, of which the results, in universal experience, have been little else than multiform and miserable error! That the principles of divine revelation are in perfect harmony with sound reason, I more than grant. We can appeal in their behalf to the judgments of men, and say, “Why even of yourselves judge ye not that which is right?” But this is a very different thing from setting up human reason, perverted as it is by depravity, as the standard of the

truth of God.—If, again, the inward light is divine illumination, we have to observe, *first*, that the assumption of it involves a begging of the question. The existence of such illumination independently of the written word,—the existence, that is, of immediate revelation in others than those by whom that word was recorded,—is the very point in dispute. No one, surely, will be so pitifully weak as to adduce Paul's reference to the saying of the poet, Menander, as a proof of it!—We have to observe, *secondly*, that to make this description of inward light the standard of divine communications, is to make it the standard of itself. You lay claim to immediate revelation, as the privilege of all who live under the new covenant economy. What, then, is the difference between immediate revelation and inward light? If we are to try the former by the latter, what is this but trying it by itself, and making the Spirit's illumination in one the test of the Spirit's illumination in another; which amounts to the same thing as having no test at all? Every man's own light is his own standard; and is the standard of the light in others; and is the standard of the light even in the Holy Scriptures, inasmuch as the Spirit himself is above the external word, and his direct communications are more to be looked to than those which have come to us through the medium of others. And is this to do honour to the Scriptures?

That I do not go too far in this last position,—that Quaker principles do in reality, however much Friends may at times disclaim it, place the immediate revelation of the Spirit above that which is contained in the written volume of inspiration,—may be made apparent by exemplification in facts, as well as by general reasoning.—The lives of some of your most noted characters, both in England and in America, —the life, for example, of George Fox, and that of Job Scott,—bring before us men, not taking the written word as “the light of their feet and the lamp of their paths,” ever searching for and following its directions,—but waiting for the immediate visitations of the Spirit to themselves, listening to his secret voices in their own minds, and even proceeding with confidence on his prophetic intimations to them of the future! Have the Scriptures, in such cases, the prominence and the deference due to them? Are they not rather thrown into the back ground? Do not the auto-biographers appear before us, rather as themselves inspired, and walking in the conscious dignity of such inspiration, than as humbly submitting themselves to the guidance of the inspiration of others?—on an equality with Isaiah and Jeremiah, and Peter and Paul, as fellow-partakers with them of the same Spirit of immediate revelation, rather than sitting down at their feet, to receive their instructions as the truly inspired and divinely constituted guides

to truth and duty,—of whom God says, “He that heareth you heareth me,” and who could say of themselves, “We are of God: he who is of God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth not us?”

Barclay represents the direct manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the mind as more to be depended on than the Scriptures, at any rate as we possess them; and, in order to recommend the more his favourite inward light, he takes very unseemly and mischievous pains to place in the strongest possible point of view the prejudices, the unfaithfulness, and the consequent false renderings, of translators, as well as the accidental errors, the various readings, and other corruptions of the sacred text. According to him, the direct manifestation of the Spirit is clearer and more satisfactory than truth coming to us through any such medium:—“It is through and by the clearness which “that Spirit gives us,” he says, “that we are only “best rid of the difficulties that occur to us with regard to the Scriptures.” And the instance adduced by him, in illustration and proof of this, is indeed a most extraordinary one:—“The real and undoubted experience whereof I myself have been a witness of, with great admiration of the love of God “to his children in these latter days: for I have “known some of my friends, who profess the same “faith with me, faithful servants of the Most High “God, and full of divine knowledge of his truth, as

“ it was immediately and inwardly revealed to them
 “ by the Spirit, from a true and living experience,
 “ who not only were ignorant of the Greek and He-
 “ brew, but even some of them could not read their
 “ own vulgar language, who, being pressed by their
 “ adversaries by some citations out of the English
 “ translation, and finding them to disagree with the
 “ manifestation of truth in their own hearts, have
 “ boldly affirmed the Spirit of God never said so,
 “ and that it was certainly wrong; for they did not
 “ believe that any of the holy prophets or apostles
 “ had written so; which, when I, on this account,
 “ seriously examined, I really found to be errors and
 “ corruptions of the translators; who (as in most
 “ translations) do not so much give us the gen-
 “ uine signification of the words, as strain them to
 “ express that which comes nearest to that opinion
 “ and notion they have of truth.”*—It would have
 been well, had Barclay given us some little infor-
 mation, what the passages were to which he refers;
 that so we might have judged between him and our
 translators, whom he so unceremoniously criminales.
 It is not impossible, that we might have thought the
 straining on the other side, and the translators not so
 far wrong. At all events, we should have been al-
 lowed to judge for ourselves.—It is quite conceivable,

* Apol. page 82.

that a person, who has formed his views of divine truth from extensive and careful examination of the Scriptures themselves, might suspect the correctness with which a particular passage had been translated, on the ground of the sentiment conveyed being at variance with what is usually called the “analogy of faith,” and, on examination, find his suspicions well-founded. But this is a case quite different from Barclay’s. His object is, to exalt the inward light, or immediate revelation, as a privilege superior in excellence to the possession of the written word, in any translation, or even in the original text. I say, even in the original text; for of it there have been corruptions, some of them more and some of them less important, and various readings, contending for the preference:—and indeed, it is *only by translation* that the meaning of the text, however immaculate it be supposed, *can* be known,—it being sufficiently manifest, that the man who does not follow the translation of another, must follow his own.—By thus exalting immediate revelation at the expense of the written word, the latter is proportionally depreciated, and its certainty and authority alike impaired. If indeed it be so, that we are surer of truth by hearkening to the voice of the Spirit speaking immediately to ourselves, than by having recourse to those records of inspiration, where there may be errors both in the transcription and translation;—if it be so, that

the danger of mistaking the reality of communications from the Spirit to ourselves is smaller than the danger of mistaking the meaning of the recorded communications to others;—what becomes of the inducement to study the Scriptures? They cannot fail to be little thought of, and little read and investigated, in proportion as men come to think they have something else that is clearer and better,—something that qualifies them for detecting and rectifying the errors of the written record, instead of requiring them to come to that record for the detection and rectification of their own!

This is certainly a novel principle of Biblical criticism; and, were it not for its rank mysticism, and its seriously mischievous tendency, one might be disposed to make a little merry with it. I refrain, however. Whether there be less danger of error in hearkening to the Spirit in ourselves, than in hearkening to the Spirit through the medium of the written record, is a question which few will have much hesitation in answering, who are at all duly aware of the unnumbered sources of self-delusion in the human mind. The length to which the adoption of Barclay's principle may carry a man, is affectingly illustrated in the case mentioned by Mr Newton in his "Remonstrance to the Society of Friends." Before mentioning it, it is necessary to premise, that Barclay applies his principle, not merely to the im-

mediate manifestation of the Spirit in spiritual men, or genuine believers in Christ, but to that universal light within, which Friends hold to be enjoyed by all men, in virtue of Christ's mediation.—“ Last year,” says Mr Newton, “ while travelling in Ireland, I met with a physician, who had been educated “ as a Friend, and professed entire coincidence with “ the doctrines of Barclay, though he believed not in “ the Lamb slain for sin. When the concluding “ verses of the 9th of Hebrews were quoted (‘ without shedding of blood is no remission’) he refused “ to receive it as Scripture, because it did not meet “ the witness of the Spirit in his own mind ; and he “ then instanced other passages which he rejected on “ the same principle. Thus an unregenerate man, “ taught by Barclay to believe that God dwelt in “ him, was determining what he would not receive “ as Scripture, and using the very principle of Barclay in defending the rejection of the blood of the “ covenant.”*—You may allege, that this is the abuse of the principle ; but to me it seems to be no more than its legitimate application. This man had the same right to follow “ the witness of the Spirit in his own mind,” that the others had, whose conduct Barclay sanctions and commends, regarding its result with admiration and gratitude, as a signal exemplifi-

* Remonstrance, &c., page 46, Note.

cation of “the love of God to his children in these latter days.” If the principle did indeed chance in the one case to lead right, (for which, however, we have no evidence but Barclay’s opinion;) it chanced, in the other, to lead wrong. And it is manifestly a principle, which, by leaving truth to be determined by the impressions of every man’s own mind, and those impressions subject to the illusive influence of a heart “deceitful above all things,” is not at least less likely to lead wrong than to lead right. Whether it has not led even Mr Barclay himself to principles at variance with those taught by the Apostles of Christ,—to principles that go far to subvert the Gospel, we may hereafter have occasion to examine. I now speak only of the *tendency* of the principle; and this, I conceive to be, both to draw away the thoughts from the Scriptures to what is believed to be a higher authority, and to leave that authority dependant on the fancied spiritual illumination of every man’s own mind.

It will not avail you to say, in answer to this, that there are differences of sentiment among those who profess to defer to the Scriptures themselves as the primary and only test. We grant it; we deplore it. But there is this difference between you and us; and it is a most important one, in as far as the respect due to the Scriptures is concerned,—that no protestant interpreters regard their expositions of Scripture

as possessing any pretension to inspired authority ; they all hold that authority to lie solely in the inspired writings themselves ; and this principle binds them to one point—the ascertaining of the real import of those writings. This import alone, when duly ascertained, they regard as of divine obligation. But you, on the contrary, pretend to a source of information and direction superior to what you are accustomed to call—may I not say disparagingly ?—the *mere external rule* :—and, while this necessarily leads to the practical depreciation of that rule, it exposes you to two sources of error instead of one ; the first being the liableness, common to you with others, to misapprehension of the lessons of Scripture, when you do have recourse to it,—and the second, the liableness, peculiar to Friends, to self-deception and mistake, as to the reality of the Spirit's intimations to yourselves. I am well aware, (it would be impiety to question it,) that the blessed God, having immediate access to the human mind, can impart to any man, whensoever he pleases, the absolute assurance that a particular communication comes from Him. That he did this, in many instances, to prophets and apostles, independently of the evidence of external signs, I freely grant. Even by them, however, such signs were not unfrequently sought for their own fuller satisfaction ; and for the

satisfaction of others they were indispensable:—
which leads me to observe—

4. That the modern revelations of Quakerism, even on the assumption of their being genuine, and of their being certified to the mind of the individual with divine assurance (an assumption, however, which would be a begging of the question at issue,—the question, namely, whether such revelations, independent of what is already recorded in the Scriptures, be still made)—yet can be of avail, so far as their authority is concerned, and the consequent obligation they impose, *to him only who receives them*. How are they to avail *for others*?

But, the present letter having been more than sufficiently extended, I shall defer the consideration of this question, along with remarks on some other topics connected with the all-important subject of the authority and completeness of the Scriptures, to form the contents of my next, and subscribe myself again,

Yours very respectfully,

R. W.

LETTER III.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

IN the conclusion of my last letter, I had just announced a fourth general observation, in regard to the standard of religious truth and duty. I repeat the terms in which it was then stated, and proceed with the consideration of it:—"That the
"modern revelations of Quakerism, even on the assumption of their being genuine, and of their being certified to the mind of the individual with
"divine assurance,—yet can be of avail, so far as
"their authority is concerned, and the consequent
"obligation they impose, *to him only who receives them*. How are they to avail *for others?*"—The question is one of essential moment.—How are they attested? Whatever assurance inspired men had of old, that "the Divinity stirred within them," and that the intimations to their minds were from Him,—this assurance was exclusively their own. They could not convey it to other minds. It was of too peculiar a nature, to be known otherwise than by

experience. Hence they required credentials of their commission, and of the divine authority of their message. They performed miracles; they delivered predictions. If any man, therefore, now assures us of his being “moved by the Holy Spirit,” like the “holy men of God” by whom the divine oracles were delivered of old, we are fully entitled to demand his credentials; to say to him, “What sign showest thou, that we may see it and believe thee?” In what other way is the revelation given to one man to have authority with another? Must we, in all cases, take it upon trust; and, whenever a man—let the excellence of his character be what it may—is pleased to assure us that “the Spirit moveth him” to make any particular communication, must we accept it simply on his word, and defer to him as an inspired authority?—or must every individual wait for the Spirit’s intimations to himself? I certainly feel myself, not merely warranted, but imperatively bound, before accepting as divine the lessons or the commands, the counsels, the consolations, or the admonitions, of another, to ask satisfactory evidence of his speaking from God. The correspondence between the witness of the Spirit in him, and the witness of the Spirit in me, is not sufficient; for both may be a delusion:—and if they should differ, which am I to follow?

Allow me, in this connexion, a few remarks on the

extent of fallacy and contradiction into which the admission of a single false principle may lead. I take my exemplification from the same eminent individual, Barclay himself. He writes clearly and ably, when he happens upon right ground; but, on the subject before us, and on some others, he is betrayed by the exigencies of a false principle, into the most extraordinary inconsistencies.—In the first place, for example, he confounds the *thing believed* and the *mode of its communication to the mind*.—He lays down as a maxim what no Christian of any intelligence will dispute, that the object of the faith of the saints has, in all ages, been the same. But, his creed requiring that the object of faith be *something inward*,—the spiritual mystical Saviour, the Christ within,—he is led by this into the strange confusion to which I have just adverted. As a specimen of this confusion, of which it were not difficult to produce many, observe what he says, when speaking of the examples of faith enumerated in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews:—“ And as to the other part or consequence of the antecedent, to wit, that the object is
 “ one where the faith is one, the apostle also proveth
 “ it in the fore-cited chapter, where he makes all the
 “ worthies of old examples to us. Now, wherein are
 “ they imitable, but because they believed in God?
 “ And what was the object of their faith, but inward
 “ and immediate revelation, as we have before proved?

“ Their example can be nowise applicable to us, unless we believe in God as they did ; that is, by the “ same object.”—Confusion of ideas seems here to have led to confusion of terms. *Inward and immediate revelation*, was not surely the *object* of their faith, or the *thing believed* : it was no more than the *mode of its communication* to the mind. When it is said “ Their example can be no ways applicable to “ us, unless we believe in God as they did ; that is, “ *by the same object* ; ” the confusion of terms is surprising. If the words have any meaning at all, they must mean, that we cannot be said to believe *the same thing*, unless it be communicated to us *in the same way* ; that the *object* of our faith cannot be the same, unless the *mode of communication* be the same ; that that which was communicated to prophets and apostles by direct inspiration, must also be communicated to us by direct inspiration, else we cannot be said to have the same faith with them,—to believe the same thing !—“ If the object of faith were not “ one and the same both to us and to them, then it “ would follow that we were to know God some other “ way than by the Spirit ! ”—that is, (is it not ?) unless God is known in the same way, it cannot be the same God that is known :—unless faith in God arise, in every case, from immediate inspiration, it cannot be the same God that is the object of it :—unless all believers are, in the same sense as prophets and

apostles, *inspired men*, there are no believers!—That I am not doing Barclay injustice, or stretching his language beyond its legitimate meaning, in considering him, when he speaks of knowing God only *by the Spirit*, as meaning, not the mere communication of the spiritual discernment of truth already revealed, but the immediate revelation of it to the mind, is apparent from the fact of his applying freely to all believers the promises which Jesus made to those commissioned ambassadors who were to convey, with accredited authority, his doctrines and commandments to men. Here, we apprehend, respected friends, lies one leading mistake amongst you. I make it my second particular, in illustration of Barclay's confusion of ideas arising from his prime fallacy.

He confounds, I say, in the *second* place, direct and proper inspiration with the ordinary illuminations of the Spirit of God. Jesus says to his apostles, John xvi. 12—15. “ I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth : for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak : and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me : for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine : therefore said I, that he shall take of mine,

and shall show it unto you.”—On the ground of such assurances it is, that, for the full revelation of the mind and will of the Lord, we look to those writings of his apostles which were given to the world subsequently to the period when they obtained “the promise of the Father,” the gift of the Spirit, for which they had been commanded to wait; and that we demonstrate the unreasonableness of Socinians, in undervaluing the apostolic epistles, which were the results of their full inspiration. Yet by Barclay, such promises, instead of being appropriated to the apostles, are interpreted as belonging, indiscriminately, to all believers. I am not disposed to question the propriety of so interpreting some of the things contained in the valedictory address of the Saviour from which the preceding verses are quoted, respecting the mission and work of the Spirit. What is said, for example, of his “convincing the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,” relates to his operation in the conversion of men by means of the ministry of those whom he was, at the same time, to endow for that ministry by his plenary inspiration; and what is subsequently said of his agency as the *paraclete*,—the comforter, or monitor, of his people, though primarily meant for the encouragement of the servants of the Lord, in sustaining the trials and conflicting with the difficulties of their work, it would yet be as hypercritical as it would be disheartening,

to restrict to them alone. But to infer from this, that the whole of what is promised to the apostles is equally promised to all the followers of Christ, is to run far and wildly to the opposite extreme. When Jesus promises his Spirit, to supply to them the deficiency of his own present instructions,—to “lead them into all truth,”—and to “bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them;” he gives them, by the latter of these expressions, the assurance of so full and perfect a recollection of the doings and sayings of their Master, as should enable them to record them for mankind, without the possibility of inaccuracy or mistake; and by the former, the still further assurance of so full a discovery to their minds of the entire system of evangelical truth, as should fit them for being the infallible teachers of that truth to the world.—Is this, then, a promise, I ask you, to be interpreted as the common privilege of believers?—nay, your system, I presume, if consistent with itself, would warrant my extending the question still more widely, and saying—of believers *and unbelievers*;—for your universal light, which is identified by you with the promised illumination of the Spirit, is not of course confined to the believing followers of Christ, but common to them, as the result of his mediation, with mankind at large!—the *Christ within* (which, in your peculiar phraseology, is the same with the Holy

Spirit) “enlightening every man that cometh into the world.”—If the promise of being “led into all truth”—that is, directly and independently of all human means, were to be interpreted as extending to all even of the disciples of Jesus, would not such interpretation go far to supersede the necessity of the Scriptures as the source of instruction, and so (as stated in my last letter) to annihilate, or at least very greatly to diminish, the inducement to the study of them? But I must go a step further. I ask you another question. You will not deny, that, in order to any one’s being a disciple of Jesus, he must know the doctrines of Jesus; and, as these doctrines are inseparably associated with certain *facts*, he must know those facts,—the facts of the gospel history. Now, the question I have to ask is simply this—Are you aware of any instances, or even of one single instance, in which these facts have come to be known by direct communication to the mind from the Spirit of God, independently of any acquaintance with the Scripture record itself, or of any information imparted by those who had derived their knowledge from it?—There is, I apprehend, on this subject, a good deal amongst you of a loose and indefinite phraseology, which, when examined, means nothing; when put into the crucible, and exposed to the furnace of criticism, evaporates, and leaves no residuum. You speak of it as the common privilege of God’s people,

under the new covenant dispensation, that they are directly “led by the Spirit into all truth,” that they “have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things,” that “they need not any man to teach them.” But I repeat and press the question, Has the knowledge of *gospel facts*, on which gospel doctrines are founded, ever been imparted to any mind, since the time when “the vision and the prophecy were sealed up” in Patmos, without the instrumental means (directly or indirectly employed) of the written record? If you say, that a man may be a disciple of Christ, by having the *Christ within*, independently of all knowledge of the *Christ without*,—which would amount to the same thing with saying, that he may be “led into all truth,” and “know all things,” independently of any acquaintance with the fundamental facts of the evangelical history,—I can only answer, in the words of Sterne, “That I deny;” and I am supported in the denial of it by the entire tenor of the New Testament. Such an assertion, indeed, would carry us beyond the limits of the written record,—beyond the bounds of reason and common sense,—and land us in the region of spiritual meteorology and mysticism,—the *plenum in vacuo*, the fulness of nothing,—where all is lightness and vertigo, and there is no rest for the sole of the foot. When Paul tells me, that he “determined not to know any thing,” in his preaching, “save Jesus

Christ, and him crucified ;"—when he exhibits the substance of the gospel preached by him as consisting in the facts that " Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures ;" I have something palpable, of which my mind has a distinct and firm apprehension. But when I am told of the " Lamb slain " meaning the " light or principle of life " in man " resisted and grieved ;"—of the Christ within and his " spiritual flesh and blood ;"—of this flesh and blood being " the same as the light that enlighteneth every man ;"—of " the outward Lamb " being but a type, or " showing forth of the inward Lamb ;" in a word, as Mr Newton expresses it, of " inward mediation, inward atonement, inward spiritual blood ;"—when from the Christ to whom the gospel bears testimony, the Christ born in Bethlehem, agonizing in Gethsemane, and dying on Calvary, as the atonement for the sins of the world, my attention is thus drawn to an undefinable sentimental something within myself,—not an exercise of mind relative to this external Saviour, by which, through the influence of the Spirit, I become interested in the merits of his obedience and sacrifice,—but something that, under the various designations of spirit within, light within, Christ within, principle of life, inward spiritual blood, &c. &c. is my Saviour, my true and only Saviour, which the

outward Christ only represented and shadowed forth ; —I feel that I am “ moved away from the hope of the gospel,”—that which is the ground of my hope not being the very Christ that suffered on the cross, and put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, but a principle within, of which his name only furnishes one of the designations :—“ Christ in you the hope of glory” being interpreted, not of Christ the incarnate Son of God, the Word made flesh, “ dwelling in the heart *by faith*,” as the object of that heart’s devoted love, which is the plain and simple meaning of the apostle’s words,—but of this abstract impalpable *Christ within* ; of which the very variety of its designations shows how confused is the conception, and of which, the more is said to explain and define it, that conception becomes the more obscure, shadowy, and shapeless.—But I am forgetting myself ; —I must not diverge further from the point I was discussing—namely, that by Barclay and others, proper inspiration is confounded with the ordinary illumination of the Spirit. The former was promised by Christ to his apostles ; and the promise was fulfilled on the memorable day of Pentecost. The very terms of the promise, it might be farther observed, appropriate it to them ; “ bringing all things *to their remembrance*” applying with no propriety to any others than to those who had been the attendants on his ministry “ all the while that he went in and out

amongst them,"—who had "seen, and heard, and looked upon, and handled" him.—With regard to the latter, I would only say farther, that the Christ who is the object of saving knowledge and faith, is the Christ revealed in the gospel testimony, the Jesus of Nazareth, of whose birth, and life, and doctrines, and miracles, and sufferings, and death, and resurrection, and ascension to glory, the inspired apostles bear witness;—and that it is neither by the Spirit independently of the word that this Christ is savingly known, nor by the word independently of the Spirit. It is by both; by the Word as the instrumental means, by the Spirit as the efficient agent. In the word, the person, character, and work of Christ are the subject of inspired testimony; by the Spirit, the moral blindness of the sinner to the glories of his person, the beauties of his character, and the divine wonders of his work, is, by an operation of which the nature and mode are to us inscrutable, graciously removed; and, the instant this "spiritual discernment" is imparted, he receives Christ, and Christ is "in him, the hope of glory." Thus Christ and the Spirit have their distinct and proper places. By you they are confounded and identified; the *light* within being used convertibly with both the *Spirit* within and the *Christ* within. Thus too *inspiration* and *spiritual illumination* are duly distinguished; the former being the direct and infallible revelation of

truth to the mind,—the latter, the discernment by the mind of the divine excellence and suitableness of the truth so revealed.

Under Proposition II., at the close of Section IX., Barclay says :—“ What is proper in this place to be proved is, that Christians now are to be led inwardly and immediately by the Spirit of God, even in the same manner (though it befall not many to be led in the same measure) as the saints were of old.”—On the first reading of this sentence, I marvelled greatly. Understanding by the saints *of old*, those who lived under the former dispensation, it seemed very strange, and very inconsistent, to represent a dispensation, of which the characteristic distinction is its being “the ministration of the Spirit,” as *more restricted* than the former in the abundance of spiritual influence; so that the possession of that influence in a superior measure should be found in cases of rare exception only to the average ratio. On looking forward, however, I perceived, from the passages of Scripture quoted in proof,—which are principally the promises already referred to in the gospel by John, and certain promises of the Spirit given by the Old Testament prophets in their anticipations of gospel days,—that by the “saints of old,” when contrasted with saints now, he means rather those who lived in “the beginning of the gospel;” and the restriction of the immediate communications

of the Spirit in more modern times, he must consider as arising, not from any limitation in the promises themselves, but from the prevailing want of faith in them among professed believers. But then, when he speaks of “Christians now being led *inwardly and immediately* by the Spirit of God, *in the same manner* as the saints of old,” he takes it for granted that it was the universal privilege of the “saints of old” to be led thus “inwardly and immediately” by the Spirit. The question, then, comes to be, what does he mean by this “inward and immediate” leading?—and, from the entire tenor of his proofs and illustrations, it is manifest that he means the same kind of *direct inspiration* which was bestowed upon the apostles and others, to qualify them as the infallible messengers of truth to mankind. It is no wonder, that, with this conception of divine influence, he should represent an equal measure of it as now-a-days a rarity!—limited, we may presume, to the Friends, who believe in it and look for it, and even amongst them, presenting itself only occasionally in instances of distinguished faith! But we distinctly deny that this immediate communication of divine truth to the mind, independently of the intervention of human teaching, *was* the common privilege of the saints of old, any more than it is of the saints now. We conceive that it was from those “holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by

the Holy Ghost," that the great general body of believers received their knowledge;—while, at the same time, this knowledge, though imparted by their instrumentality, was discerned and received under the illumination of the Spirit of God. This we take to be the plain testimony of the inspired writers themselves; in proof of which passages from their writings might be multiplied. A few must suffice.—To the Corinthians he says—"Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, *by whom ye believed*, even as God gave to every man?" 1 Cor. iii. 5. Paul had come to Corinth, "declaring unto them the testimony of God;" the testimony, namely, concerning "Jesus Christ, and him crucified:" chap. ii. 1, 2. This testimony, communicated to them by his instrumentality, they had believed. It was he who taught them "the things of the Spirit of God;" while, at the same time, it was by a higher teaching than his, even by the accompanying illumination of the Holy Spirit himself, that they "spiritually discerned" their truth and excellence, and received them, as no longer "foolishness," but "the wisdom of God:" chap. ii. 14.—"When ye received the word of God," says he to the believers at Thessalonica, "*which ye heard of us*, ye received it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." 1 Thess. ii. 13.—To the Galatians—

“ Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach unto you any other gospel than *that which we have preached unto you*, let him be accursed :—as I said before, so say I now again, if any man preach unto you any other gospel than *that ye have received*, let him be accursed.” Gal. i. 8, 9. They received it, then, not by any direct revelation, but by the preaching of this commissioned and accredited ambassador.—To the Corinthians again—“ I declare unto you the gospel *which I preached unto you*, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand : by the which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” 1 Cor. xv. 1, 2.—The style of other apostles is the same. “ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life :—that which we have seen and heard *declare we unto you*, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things *write we unto you*, that your joy may be full. This, then, is the message which *we have heard of him, and declare unto you*, that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” 1 John i. 1, 3—5. And this style, which pervades their writings, is in full accordance with the terms of their commission from their divine Master, by which they were constituted the

authoritative teachers of mankind,—his witnesses, whom he was to accompany with satisfactory credentials, and so to sanction their testimony :—“ Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures ; and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day ; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold I send the promise of my Father upon you ; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Luke xxiv. 45—49.

This view of the divine procedure makes all sufficiently plain. There were inspired men, to whom the truth was communicated by direct revelation. They were commissioned to be the instructors of others,—the medium of communication to the rest of mankind ; and their commission was attested by adequate credentials. At the same time, so hostile was the natural mind to the reception of the message they brought, that the agency of the divine Spirit was necessary to its being discerned by any in its truth and excellence, and received in the love of it. And so the case remains. They are still his witnesses. Their inspired writings are the same in authority with what was uttered by their living voice. By these,

“they, being dead, yet speak;” and the Spirit still makes the truth which they have there recorded “the power of God unto salvation.”—The language of Barclay, quoted above, implies that, “though it befall not many,” yet it does befall some, to be “led inwardly and immediately by the Spirit of God,” not only “in the same *manner*,” but even “in the same *measure*,” with the “saints of old:”—that is, that there are still a few to be found, however rare, who enjoy immediate revelation, in the same degree as the apostles; for he quotes the promise to the apostles in proof of it, about their being “led into all truth!” And, although he does not affirm that there are many who have inspiration in the same measure, he does affirm, that not only many but all believers, under the new economy, have it in the same manner or kind. This, I repeat, arises from confounding the extraordinary with the ordinary operations of the Spirit. The truth is, that none now have either the same measure or the same kind of inspiration; inspiration, properly so called, having ceased, when the canon of revealed truth was completed in the Scriptures. All have the same amount of privilege, in having the full discovery of the Divine Mind in this completed canon; while, in regard to the enlightening, sanctifying, gladdening, directing, and strengthening influences of the Spirit, the command to all is, “Ask, and ye shall receive.”

I have to notice, *thirdly*, that Mr Barclay greatly misapprehends, not to say misrepresents, the sentiments of those whom he opposes.—Thus, in speaking of the sameness of the object of the saints' faith in every age, he writes:—"Such as deny this proposition now-a-days use here a distinction, granting that God is to be known by his Spirit, but again denying that it is immediate or inward, but in and by the Scriptures; in which the mind of the Spirit (as they say) being fully and amply expressed, we are thereby to know God, and be led in all things."*—Now the words "immediate *or* inward" are misleading. The two terms are not synonymous. To deny that spiritual influence is *immediate*, and to deny that it is *inward*, are not the same thing. Who amongst us denies the latter? There have been some, I am aware, who held the sentiment, and there are some who hold it still, that the sole agency of the Spirit consists in the inspiration by which the Scriptures were given; and that those Scriptures now operate of themselves, independently of any accompanying influence. But this is not the view held by any who pass under the common designation of *evangelical*. They are far from maintaining that the operation of the word and the operation of the Spirit are one and the same, or (for to this it amounts) that

* Apol. page 39.

there is no operation of the Spirit at all, but only of the word which he has dictated. We hold that there is an operation of the Spirit; an *inward* operation; an operation *on the mind*. But we hold, at the same time, that this operation is with or by the truth, agreeably to the explicit testimonies of inspired apostles:—James i. 18, “Of his own will begat he us, *by the word of truth*, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures:”—1 Pet. i. 23, “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever:—And this is the word, which by the gospel is preached unto you.”—And the same word continues, under the influence of the same Spirit, the instrumental means of progressive sanctification:—“When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe:”—“He that is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him”—(that is, the incorruptible seed of the word)—“and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” 1 Thess. ii. 13. 1 John iii. 9.—In as far, however, as the operation of the Spirit is *inward*, there is a sense in which it is also *immediate*:—that is, it is not an operation *upon the truth*; for of this it is impossible to form any conception whatever:—it is an operation *upon the mind*, when the truth is,

or has been, presented to it,—an operation, of which the *mode* is beyond our distinct apprehension, John iii. 8. but the *reality* of which is evinced in its results. When we deny it to be, in the Quaker sense, immediate, we mean that it does not consist in any *direct communication of truth to the mind, independently of the existing revelation in the Holy Scriptures*; but only in such a removal of the mind's natural blindness (a blindness arising from moral causes) as imparts a spiritual discernment of the excellence, and suitableness, and glory of the truth there revealed. It is *immediate*, as being *upon the mind*; it is *mediate*, as being *by the truth*.

A *fourth* and most glaring exemplification of the confusion arising from the adoption of a fallacious principle, is, Mr Barclay's confounding the *truth of what God reveals* with the *reality of the revelation*. No two things, surely, can be more distinct than these: yet mark how he writes, when he is proceeding to answer objections to the second part of his second proposition.—In that proposition he had affirmed, in regard to the “divine revelation, “or inward illumination,” for which he contends, its independence of any “more noble or certain rule and touchstone,” whether it be “the outward testimony of the Scriptures, or the natural reason of man;” asserting it to be as “evident and clear of itself,” and as assuredly “forcing by its own evidence and clearness, the

“well-disposed understanding to assent, irresistibly
 “moving the same thereunto, even as the common
 “principles of natural truths do move and incline the
 “mind to a natural assent: as, that the whole is
 “greater than its part; that two contradictories can-
 “not be both true nor both false.”*—Now, I have
 already asked—even on the supposed admission of
 the confidence being legitimate that is placed in this
 immediate revelation by those who are themselves
 the subjects of it, *what is it to others?* Are others
 to trust to it, without any credentials produced on the
 part of those who pretend to it? Mr Barclay seems
 to have felt the fairness and the force of this objec-
 tion, and even, (notwithstanding the strong terms
 used by him in his proposition) of the objection taken
 from the possible uncertainty to the *very person him-
 self*, of the reality of the communication:—“The
 most usual objection,” says he, “is, *that these reve-
 “lations are uncertain.*—But this bespeaketh much
 “ignorance in the opposers: for we distinguish be-
 “tween the *thesis* and the *hypothesis*,—that is, be-
 “tween the *proposition* and *supposition*. For it is
 “one thing to affirm, that *the true and undoubted
 “revelation of God’s will is certain and infallible;*
 “and another thing to affirm that this or that parti-
 “cular person or people is led infallibly by this reve-

* Apol. page 19.

“lation in what they speak or write, because they
 “affirm themselves to be led by the inward and im-
 “mediate revelation of the Spirit. The first only is
 “asserted by us; the latter may be called in ques-
 “tion. The question is not, who are or are not so
 “led?—but whether all ought not or may not be so
 “led?”*

“*The first only is asserted by us.*” What is it?
 “That the true and undoubted revelation of God’s
 “Spirit is certain and infallible!” And is this really
 what Mr B. and his friends assert?—this *all* that they
 assert? this truism,—which, it may be presumed,
 there never existed a creature possessing reason, on
 earth or in the universe, that could question?—
 Surely you must at once be sensible of this extraor-
 dinary fallacy. The point in question between us
 has no relation to the infallible certainty of what
 God reveals, but solely to *the reality of the revela-*
tion. If this be ascertained, there can be no doubt
 about the other.—It is here admitted by Barclay,
 that a man may “affirm himself to be led by the
 inward and immediate revelation of the Spirit,” and
 yet that his authority may be “called in question,”
 —doubted, that is, and disbelieved:—which amounts
 to the same thing as admitting that the man himself
 may be deceived! The query, therefore, comes

* Apol. page 53.

back upon us, What is the test? Are the immediate suggestions professedly received by one man, to be judged of by the immediate suggestions professedly received by another? Which have the claim to preference? One man is as much entitled to dispute the alleged revelations of another, as the other can be to dispute his. Is there no determinate common standard for both?—When Barclay says, “The question is not, who are or are not so led; but whether all ought not or may not be so led;” he surely deludes himself. For, in the first place, the proposition that “all ought to be, or may be, so led,” is by no means an identical proposition with that which he had just stated to be the affirmation of Friends,—namely, that “the true and undoubted revelation of God’s Spirit is certain and infallible:”—and secondly, Of what avail can the admission be, that “all ought to be, or may be, so led,” if there be no means of determining with certainty *when they are* so led? If this be left indeterminate, the proposition is the most useless and futile imaginable.—Yet, according to Barclay, the professed subject of immediate revelation may deceive himself. What, then, are others to do with his alleged communications? Are they not entitled to demand credentials? Assuredly. For, observe,—even on the assumption that the Scriptures were admitted to be the test, it is not enough that such communications *abide the test*. This, I say, is not

enough. They may be in harmony with the test, and yet, *as revelations made now*, they may have *no authority*. The revelations made to one Scripture writer were in perfect harmony with those made to another; but each had the authority of a distinct revelation. The authority of what was revealed to Jeremiah did not arise from its agreement with what had been revealed to Isaiah; nor the authority of what was revealed to Peter from its agreement with what had been revealed to Paul. The authority in each was distinct and independent,—each producing his credentials of inspiration. We distinctly deny,—not merely, with you, that any thing can be a revelation from the Spirit now that is not in agreement with the Scriptures; but that there are *any new revelations now at all*, whether in harmony with the Scriptures or not,—any thing possessing the same authority. We deny that there can be any thing *additional*, as well as any thing *contradictory*.—It is plain, that one revelation from the Spirit of truth cannot possess more authority than another. If, therefore, there really be such revelations now, they must have the same title to be standards of the recorded revelations, as the recorded revelations have to be standards of them:—Barclay to be the test of Paul, as Paul to be the test of Barclay! Are any of the Friends, then, prepared to place any of the writings of Fox, or Penn, or Barclay, or Gurney, on the same footing, in point of

authority, with those of Jeremiah and Isaiah, of Peter and Paul? If they refuse to do so, they seem to me virtually to abandon their principles. For the doctrine of immediate revelation necessarily involves equal authority in all who possess it;—nay, according to them, the Spirit himself being superior to any external revelation, the immediate intimations received from Him now, ought, in their estimation, if they are consistent with themselves, to be, of the two, the test of superior certainty! Yet alas! for the Friends, if we come to this! It will then be requisite for us, to admit *self*-contradiction, and *mutual* contradiction, amongst the evidences of inspiration; nothing being more certain, than that Barclay is inconsistent with himself, and that Barclay and Gurney (to enumerate no more) are inconsistent with each other.—And look to the condition of your Society at the present moment. Is it the same Spirit that is dictating all the variety of discordant sentiment by which it is distracted? It will not avail any of you, in this any more than in a former connexion, to reply to such questions by pointing to the differences subsisting amongst commentators on the Scriptures, and amongst the members of other bodies of Christians. The cases, as before, are widely different. You claim the privilege of immediate inspiration. Now such inspiration, if really possessed, must be uniform; its dictates all consistent with each other,

as is the case with the Scripture writers; and the very absence of such consistency is sufficient to disprove the validity of the claim. But commentators claim no such authority for their expositions, nor the members of other Christian communities for their respective standards. Differences among them, therefore, are no more than what might be expected, from the diversified endowments, and the constitutional and acquired biasses, of different human minds. But the system which makes pretensions to immediate revelation becomes, by such contradictions and inconsistencies, *felo de se*; inasmuch as each section of the upholders of the system make the same pretension, and consequently show, in their differences, one or other of two things,—either that *the Spirit of God is not one*, or that *they have not the Spirit of God*,—I mean, of course, in the sense in which they pretend to it:—and between these two conclusions, who will hesitate?

There is another point, I may notice *fifthly*, in regard to which Barclay is very inconsistent with himself, and in which his inconsistency springs from the same source as in the other cases,—namely, the *fulness of the canon* of holy writ,—or, in other words, the *completeness of the Scriptures* as a discovery of divine truth. This he appears to affirm and deny, to admit and retract, in the most extraordinary manner. He seems, for example, *in totidem verbis*, to

grant that the Scriptures are the test of religious truth, when, in a passage already cited, he says—
 “ Moreover, because they are commonly acknow-
 “ ledged by all to have been written by the dictates
 “ of the Holy Spirit, and that the errors which may
 “ be supposed by the injury of times, to have slipped
 “ in, are not such, but there is a sufficient clear tes-
 “ timony left to all the essentials of the Christian
 “ faith; we do look upon them as *the only fit outward*
 “ *judge of controversies* among Christians; and that
 “ whatsoever doctrine is contrary unto their testi-
 “ mony may therefore justly be rejected as false.
 “ And for our parts we are very willing that all our
 “ doctrines and practices be tried by them; which
 “ we never refused, nor ever shall, in all controver-
 “ sies with our adversaries, as the judge and test.
 “ We shall also be very willing to admit it as a posi-
 “ tive certain maxim, that whatsoever any do, pre-
 “ tending to the Spirit, which is contrary to the
 “ Scriptures, be accounted and reckoned a delusion
 “ of the devil.”—Bating the slur that is, here and
 elsewhere, in this author’s writings, thrown upon the
 Scriptures, as if the variety and accumulation of cor-
 ruptions had been such, as to render it quite as much
 as he could conscientiously admit, that they still con-
 tain “ a sufficient clear testimony left to the essen-
 “ tials of the Christian faith;”—as if this testimony
 were “ *left*” amidst a great deal that had been lost

or wrapt in obscurity by these corruptions!—a slur that is as false as it is insidious and mischievous;—bating this, I say, the admission contained in these sentences might be regarded as, in no small degree, satisfactory. But alas! for Barclay's consistency! In the very next page, he writes thus:—"For if the
 "Jews were directed to try all things by their law,
 "which was without them, written in tables of stone;
 "then, if we will have this advice of the prophet to
 "reach us," (the advice "To the law and to the
 Testimony; if they speak not according to this
 word, there is no light in them,") "we must make
 "it hold parallel to that dispensation of the gospel
 "which we are under: so that we are to try all
 "things, in the first place, by that *word of faith* which
 "is preached unto us, which the apostle saith is *in*
 "*the heart*, and by that law which God hath given
 "us, which the apostle saith also expressly *is written*
 "*and placed in the mind.*"*

What a tissue, either of illogical fallacies, or of jesuitical subtleties, is here! "I speak as to wise men: judge ye what I say."—1. In the sentences immediately preceding those quoted, Barclay throws out a doubt, whether, when the prophet, or Jehovah by the prophet, makes his appeal "to the law and to the testimony," this law and testimony might not

* Apol. page 87.

even then signify the *inward* and not the *outward* word! He alleges, that affirming it to signify the latter is a begging of the question! It is surely marvellous, that any man, with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and still more with those of the New, in his hand, should be bold enough even to throw out the surmise of such an interpretation; should venture even to hint, that “the law and the testimony” may mean any thing else than the revelation then existing, as communicated to Moses and the prophets. It is such an outrage on all the candour of criticism, as to render a refutation of it an insult to the reader’s understanding. It were every whit as reasonable to allege, that, when our Lord said to the lawyer who tempted him, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?”—he meant the inward, not the outward, law,—the law in the heart, not the law in the Book! Or that, when the Psalmist says—“He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children;”—he might perhaps mean, not the external, but the internal word!—2. Apparently sensible that such an explanation would not itself bear the test of “the law and the testimony,” whether outward or inward, he proceeds to institute a contrast between the outward law of the Jews and the inward law of Christians:—“it may be confessed, without any prejudice to our

“cause, that the outward law was more particularly
 “to the Jews a rule, and more principally than to
 “us; seeing their law was outward and literal, but
 “ours, under the new covenant, is expressly affirmed
 “to be inward and spiritual; so that this Scripture
 “is so far from making against us, that it makes for
 “us.” *—But this is miserable confusion. First of
 all, Barclay seems altogether to forget, that the same
 law may be both outward and inward,—in the book
 and in the heart. It was as much the duty of the
 Jews to have the law in their hearts, as it is of Chris-
 tians. It was the express command of Jehovah that
 they should :—“ And these words, which I command
 thee this day, *shall be in thine heart*, and thou shalt
 teach them diligently to thy children.” The words
 of divine instruction and precept were externally
 given by Moses; but it was, at the same time, the
 duty of every Israelite to believe, and love, and obey
 them.—And this leads me to notice further, that the
 promise “ I will put my laws in their inward parts,
 and will write them in their hearts,” has no reference
 whatever to any such fancied privilege as individual
 and immediate revelation of truth or of duty. The
 promise relates to laws already existing,—and signi-
 fies the imparting, not merely of a speculative ac-
 quaintance with these laws to the understanding, but

* Apol., page 87.

of a *right disposition towards them* in the heart,—or, in one word, the implanting there of that *love* which is “the fulfilling of the law,”—the primary and the secondary love, love to God, and love to men.—To interpret it, as if it meant, that, whereas outward revelation was the standard of truth and duty to the Israelites, inward personal immediate revelation is the standard to us, is not only to assign to Christians a test less fixed and certain,—proved so by all experience,—than that which was enjoyed by God’s people under the old economy, but to render the full and clear discoveries of the New Testament Scriptures of less real use to us than the comparatively dark and limited discoveries of the Old were to them.—3. If “the law and the testimony” are not now to be understood of the outward word,—if under the new dispensation, we are to “try all things, *in the first place*,” by the “word of faith *in the heart*,” then is the outward word, *as a test*, entirely superseded. If the inward word, or immediate revelation, is the distinguishing privilege of believers under the gospel economy; then, to make use of the outward is to act inconsistently with the divine intention, and to go back to the “beggarly elements” and stinted privileges of Judaism. If we have fulfilled the duty of “trying all things *in the first place*” by the primary and higher test, what use can there be for the lower and secondary? It can be nothing better than mockery,

after deciding by the first test (which of course, as being the first, must be the more infallible criterion of the two) to talk of applying the second. So that all he had said about the Scriptures as “the only fit outward judge of controversies among Christians” comes to nothing. I can see consistency and propriety in ascending, in the way of appeal, from an inferior to a superior tribunal; but what consistency or propriety can there be, in obtaining, “in the first place,” the decision of the superior court, and then coming down to the inferior? Would not such a process imply an impeachment of the former’s competency? And is there not, in all that Barclay says about the Scriptures as the standard of doctrine and duty, a reflexion involved against the competency of the very test to which he gives the primary place and authority?—Nor is this all.—4. When the Scriptures (however inconsistently) are admitted as a test; then the question occurs—*Of what* are they the test?—what is it we are to try by them? Is it not the very dictates of inward revelation (so called) themselves? What else is there to be tried? But if so, how strange the anomalies to which this gives rise!—When inward or immediate revelation is represented as the test by which, “in the first place,” we are to “try all things,” then it becomes the *test of itself*;—the rule, and the chief rule, by which the authority of its own intimations is to be ascertained! And

then, when the Scriptures are spoken of as the standard, we have the inferior constituted the test of the superior; the secondary test the test of the primary test! the outward standard the standard of the inward standard! the dictates of the Spirit placed above the external word, and high things said about the unreasonableness of subjecting the spiritual people of God, under the spiritual dispensation of the new covenant, to any merely external rule, or bounding and binding them by a “filled canon;”—and yet the canon, such as it is, though denied to be a filled or complete one, admitted to be an adequate criterion of every thing pretending to be a dictate of the Spirit now,—and the “external rule” ruling the spiritual rule, and determining the legitimacy of all its prescriptions!—Such are the inconsistencies resulting from a fallacious principle. The truth is, a “filled canon” is one of the blessed privileges of the New Testament church; the chief of those “better things” which “God had prepared for us, that the Old Testament saints without us should not be made perfect;”—and—(pardon me, my friends, I speak in zeal for God’s word, not in disrespect for you)—all the magniloquence of Quakerism about a higher standard is no better than “great swelling words of vanity.”—

5. What Barclay says about “the *word of faith* which is preached unto us, which the apostle saith is *in the heart*,” is most extraordinary. When Paul

speaks of its being in the heart, does he mean that it was there *by immediate revelation*, independently of outward teaching?—that it was preached there directly by the Holy Spirit? To make his language of any avail, to Barclay's purpose, such ought to be the apostle's meaning. But what are Paul's own words? “The word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thine heart, that is the word of faith *which we preach*, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” —It was the word, then, which the inspired ambassadors preached, and which they who had it in their hearts had received 'from them. And on the same principle he goes on to ask “How shall they believe in Him *of whom they have not heard?* and how shall they hear *without a preacher?*” Moses was the giver of that law, of which, in the terms appropriated and applied by Paul to the gospel, he tells the Israelites that it was “nigh unto them, in their mouth and *in their heart*, that they might do it.” Does he mean that they had received it *by immediate revelation*,—in the very same breath in which he speaks of himself as the medium of its communication? If not, neither does the apostle.

With one additional remark, I shall close my strictures on this subject; a subject, of which the importance may have led me, perhaps, into too protracted

a discussion. The remark is, that it is not easy to ascertain, with any thing like precision, what is the extent of import which we are to attach to *immediate revelation*, as claimed by the Friends.—We have seen that there is no pretension made to the revelation of new truths, but only to the new revelation of old ones. Here is one limit; and although we do find some of the earlier Quakers laying claim to the spirit of prophecy, and foretelling future events; yet this is comparatively rare; and the predictions are usually on a very small scale.—The sense most commonly attached to the phrase, in the ordinary use of it amongst Friends, appears to be, not so much the communication of truth to the mind, as the immediate superintendence of the Spirit in the direction of the conduct. Thus, William Penn, as quoted by Evans, in giving a summary of doctrine on this head, says—“First, by revelation, we understand the discovery and illumination of the light and Spirit of God, relating to those things that properly and immediately concern the daily information and satisfaction of our souls, in the way of our duty to him and our neighbour.” And afterwards:—“When neither man nor Scriptures are near us, yet there continually attends us that Spirit of truth, that immediately informs us of our thoughts, words, and deeds, and gives us true directions what to do, and what to leave undone. Is not this the rule of

“life? If ye are led by the Spirit of God, then are “ye sons of God.”*—What follows in his statement relates to doctrine, and amounts to a mere denial, under the designation of “fantastical and whimsical intoxications,” of all “pretences to the revelation of “new matter, in opposition to the ancient gospel, declared by Christ Jesus and his apostles.” “It is “not,” he says, “the revelation of new things, but the “new revelation of the eternal way of truth.”—That “eternal way of truth,” then, is revealed in the Scriptures. I ask again what I have asked before, was that “eternal way of truth” ever revealed to any Friend on earth, independently of the record of it in the Scriptures? Was “the ancient gospel, declared by Christ and his apostles,” ever received by any Friend on earth, by direct communication of the Spirit, independently of the declaration of it there? “I trow not.” And, if not, then it has been, and still is, from the Scriptures after all, and from the Scriptures alone, that Friends as well as others have obtained, and do obtain, if they have it, the knowledge of that “way of truth” which it is the chief design of the Scriptures to reveal,—the “knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.” Not one amongst them *ever had this knowledge otherwise*. No, not one. What, then,

* Exposition, pages 244, 245.

becomes of this “*new revelation* of the eternal way of truth?” What is it? Where is it? To whose writings are we to look for it? Is it to those of Fox, or Penn, or Barclay? Has any one of them, or has any one else, given us a new revelation of “the ancient gospel declared by Jesus Christ and his apostles?” Alas! if this is pretended, I must be permitted to say “The old is better.” They are but human expounders, like others, of divine discoveries; from whom we can dissent without presumption; and whom, on some important points, we cannot but regard, with deep sorrow, as misinterpreters and subverters of the ancient gospel. They make no pretensions to the revelation of new truths; yet if the doctrines they teach be truths at all, they are, without controversy, new truths. Would to God they had kept more closely to the old! They differ from the apostles; they differ from one another; they differ from themselves.

While there is no pretension to any thing *new* in the department of *doctrine*; neither, it is presumed, is there any such pretension in the department of *moral duty*. No Quaker pretends to be an inspired legislator for others; but every Quaker does pretend to the immediate suggestions of the Spirit, independently of the written record, as the rule of his daily conduct;—“when neither man nor Scripture is near him.”—We have nothing to do with “*man*,” but

what is meant by “*Scripture* not being near him?” You may smile at the question, and reply—Why, that he happens not to have his Bible in his pocket. But ought it not to be felt the incumbent duty of every Christian, to make himself so familiar with the principles and precepts of the sacred volume, as that, in the ordinary course of life, he shall very seldom have occasion for the direct consultation of it? These principles and precepts are not so very numerous, minute, and complicated, as to render this at all a task of difficult accomplishment to any spiritual mind. Let me not be misunderstood, as if I were setting aside the Spirit’s agency in the guidance of God’s people, and discouraging, consequently, compliance with the injunction, “Ask, and ye shall receive.” It is not I that am chargeable with setting aside the Spirit; it is the Friends that are chargeable with setting aside the word. In regard to duty, as in regard to truth, I am for retaining both. It is *by the word* that the Spirit guides us to truth, and conducts us in duty. This is the general principle; and it is with general principles, not with special exceptions, I have at present to do. Emergencies may be conceivable, cases of sudden and embarrassing perplexity, when “neither man nor Scriptures may be near us,” when the right application of the general principles and preceptive directions of the record may not at once be manifest, and when there is little or

no time for reflexion or for the consultation of our guide:—that, in such circumstances, the believer should look to God for the influence from above of which he feels his need, who will deny? He will do it, I had almost said, instinctively. But even in such cases, what is his *first* duty? Is it to look for the Spirit independently of the word? I say, no. His first duty is, to try to recollect the principles and precepts of that word, which bear relation to the circumstances in which he is placed, and to look for grace rightly to apply them. The exceptions supposed are cases wherein such recollection fails, or leaves the mind in perplexity. What I complain of is, that the Friends reverse the proper order of proceeding; making the general rule the exception, and the exception the general rule. The general rule is —“Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lamp unto my path.”* The use of the Spirit is, chiefly, to give us simplicity of heart in following this light; —to remove or counteract those perverse influences which so distort or dim the vision as to prevent our seeing clearly whither it leads us, or by which we are disinclined from following its guidance;—to impart that humble submission of mind and heart to divine dictation, to which, under the designation of *meekness*, the promise of divine direction is given:—

* Psalm cxix. 105.

“The meek he will guide in judgment; to the meek he will teach his way.”* But how does he teach him?—“Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him *out of thy law*.”† And what was the method adopted by the Psalmist for his preservation from evil?—“Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.”‡ And this he represents as one of the characteristic distinctions of the righteous man: “The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.”§ —I greatly fear, that the principle held by Friends on this subject is, in more respects than one, eminently pernicious. It prevents them from feeling the necessity of cultivating that familiarity of acquaintance with the principles and precepts of the divine record, which is so very desirable; the word of God, dwelling in the heart, being the true “light within” for the guidance of the conduct. And, by inducing them to give themselves up to a system of *impressions*,—to surrender their conduct to the guidance of *present impulses*,—under the notion of obeying the Spirit,—to expose themselves to many an illusion, and to the danger of many a false step. I should tremble to say this, did I think their way was the way prescribed in the word. But I think otherwise.

* Psalm xxv. 9.

† Psalm xciv. 12.

‡ Psalm cxix. 11.

§ Psalm xxxvii. 31.

And I am persuaded that, in not a few cases of truly serious Friends, who have been found to ascribe, with thankfulness, their preservation in the right way to the immediate suggestions of the Holy Spirit, there has not, after all, been any material difference, in point of *fact*, whatever there may have been in point of *theory*, between them and those Christians who have sought to follow the word with the Spirit's aid ; that the dictates of conscience, and the "word of Christ dwelling in them," have been what the one as well as the other have actually obeyed, although under different appellations. As to those prototypes of Quakerism, who have professed to live under the constant guidance of a *direct inspiration*, of the same nature with that possessed by apostles when they "assayed to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit suffered them not," and "were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia," I apprehend they exalt themselves in professing to exalt the Spirit ; at any rate, they exalt the Spirit in themselves at the expense of the Spirit in the apostles, by preferring his immediate suggestions to his recorded counsels :— and by themselves, and by the influence of their example, the work of the Spirit has too often been degraded, through the frequent littleness, and occasional ludicrousness, of his alleged intimations, as well as, at times, through their very questionable propriety.

In my next Letter, I shall take the liberty of examining the doctrine of Friends respecting the “inward light.”

Yours respectfully,

R. W.

LETTER IV.

ON UNIVERSAL INWARD LIGHT.

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

WHEN I first thought of addressing these letters to you, my impression was, that I should not experience any great difficulty on such points of the controversy between you and other bodies of professing Christians, as it was my design to take up. I never found myself more mistaken. But observe wherein the difficulty has lain. I fancied, that, at each step of the controversy, I should have something *definite* with which to grapple. It is here I have been disappointed. Those views which have been considered as distinctive of the Friends, I have found assuming so great a variety of aspects and modifications among their own writers; the phraseology used, with apparent explicitness, by one, employed by another in a sense, however analogous, yet so materially different; that I have been greatly at a loss, and have at times been about to relinquish my purpose, in fretfulness and disgust. For after having, in my own mind, and to my own satisfaction, met

and refuted a particular statement of doctrine, I have found it starting up in a new or greatly altered form, to which the previous answers were, in some points, not at all suitable. If this has been the case with regard to the subject of my former letters, it has been still more so on that of the present. Never was there a more perfect *Proteus* than your *inward light*. Like every thing mystical, it is undefined, and as variable as the mountain mists of the morning. There is no catching, no fixing, no analysing it. When you think you have got it in something of a tangible shape; when you have put it into your crucible, and exposed it to the furnace of criticism, and have evaporated it till you have left no residuum, no substance of thought;—lo! in the bottom of your vessel, it reappears in a different form, for which you must vary the process of trial;—and, when this has been done, with the same result, you have only to begin again.

Nothing could be easier than, by patching together the varied phraseology in which different, or even the same writers, have clothed this *inward light*, to invest the whole system with the grotesque and piebald garment of ludicrous incongruity. I am aware, however, that ridicule is not the test of truth; and such a mode of treatment of one of your fundamental articles, would ill comport with the avowed kindly feeling and friendly design of these letters. That I

may not, therefore, either, on the one hand, do injustice to your principles, or, on the other, make one writer responsible for the sentiments of another, it is my intention, on the present subject, to take up, in the first instance, the view of it which is presented by your most highly and justly esteemed living writer, Joseph John Gurney,—to take that view *by itself*, independently altogether of the sentiments and language of the more primitive and thorough-going Quakers. Many among you, I have reason to think, complain of Mr Gurney, as having, on some points, laid himself open to the charge of compromising and betraying the cause of true primitive Quakerism. And assuredly, if such writers as the author of “Truth Vindicated” are to be considered as fair expounders of your original system, there is ground for the imputation; for between the ancient Quakerism of Fox, and Penn, and even of Barclay, and the modern Quakerism of Mr Gurney, there are differences of no trivial amount.—I am desirous, however, to do justice to Mr Gurney; and shall therefore, in the first instance, take up his views of the “universal light,” contained in the “Addendum to Chapter I.,” in the seventh edition of his “Observations on the distinguishing views and practices of the Society of Friends.” The Addendum bears date “A. D. 1834.”

I find little that appears objectionable in the gen-

eral principles laid down by Mr Gurney on the subject of human accountableness. This accountableness may be regarded in relation to two points,—*knowledge* and *obedience*; and these correspond to their respective objects, the former to *truth*, the latter to *duty*.—In order to accountableness, in the form of culpability, for the want of the knowledge of truth, two things are self-evidently necessary; *sufficient means of discovery*, and *sufficient capacity of understanding*. To these, indeed, in some cases, a third might be added, unless it be regarded as included in the first—*sufficient evidence*. These three things clearly exhaust all that is requisite to constitute a ground of responsibility,—*means, capacity, and evidence*. I have mentioned the third distinctly from the first, merely because the two seem to be so distinguished by our Lord, when he says of the Jews,—“If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin:”—“If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin:” the former sentence relating to *information*, the latter to *evidence*.—To speak as if, in any case, the *actual possession* of knowledge were necessary to accountableness for the *absence* of it, is obviously to speak in terms of self-contradiction. If, in any case, the knowledge to be attained requires, in order to its attainment, the previous knowledge of something else, then the possession of this previous

knowledge must be reckoned as a part of the first particular—*sufficient means*. But nothing can be more self-evident than that the *possession* of knowledge can in no wise be necessary to accountableness for the *absence of itself*! How far Mr Gurney does not lay himself open to the charge of maintaining something very like this self-contradictory proposition, may by and by appear.

With regard to responsibility in the department of moral duty,—there must be *a law*, and there must be the *means of knowing* that law. The responsibility of the Gentiles, or heathen, therefore, implies their having a law; for “where no law is, there is no transgression.” If from their not having the *written* law, it followed that they had *no* law, it would have followed also, that they had no responsibility. But they have a law,—the law of nature and of conscience;—a law, of whose dictates the clearness and fulness have, by moral causes existing in the depravity of man’s fallen nature, been very sadly impaired. For this deficiency, as springing from such causes, he is accountable and culpable; and, the deficiency itself thus involving blame, it does not, in any degree, diminish his responsibility.—Neither in regard to the knowledge of God himself, nor in regard to the knowledge of God’s will, is there any thing farther necessary to constitute men “without excuse” for their ignorance and for all its results, than the three things

mentioned,—sufficient *means*, sufficient *capacity*, and sufficient *evidence*.

It appears to me—(if I am wrong, it will be from misunderstanding, not misrepresentation)—that Mr Gurney reasons incorrectly, when, besides his two particulars, (under the former of which he evidently includes my third)—the *means* and the *capacity* of knowledge, he speaks of something more, as required in the ground of accountableness,—namely, *a certain measure of knowledge itself actually and directly imparted*. Thus he writes—pages 49, 50 :—“ It is
 “ evident that the ungodliness of the Gentiles is
 “ here condemned” (that is in Rom. i. 18—23) “ on
 “ the ground that some knowledge of divine truth
 “ was bestowed upon them. Not only were they
 “ furnished with a visible evidence, in the outward
 “ creation, of the eternal power and godhead of Je-
 “ hovah, but ‘ that which may be known of God was
 “ manifest in them.’ They were not left without
 “ some sense of his holiness, and of their responsi-
 “ bility to him, as the righteous governor of the
 “ world. Thus it appears, that their guilt consisted
 “ in *restraining the truth* by their unrighteousness.
 “ Graciously provided as they were, not only with
 “ outward proofs of the omnipotence of God, but
 “ with a measure of light respecting his moral gov-
 “ ernment, they nevertheless followed the corrupt
 “ desires and devices of their own hearts. They held

“the truth in bondage, not yielding to its influence, “so that it was suppressed in their hearts, and did “not rise into dominion.”—In the former part of this passage, he distinguishes between the knowledge of God, in what are called his natural perfections, derived from the external indications of these perfections in the works of creation,—and the knowledge of God in his relation to men as their moral Governor, which, according to him, is more directly “shown unto them,” and “manifest in them,”—not deduced, but imparted. Had he meant by this no more than that such knowledge originated in the dictates of natural conscience, suggesting and maintaining in the mind the sense of responsibility to a moral Governor, there had been little, if any thing, peculiar or objectionable. But this “*inward universal light*,”—on which, much more than on the inferential knowledge of God from his works, he conceives the apostle’s argument respecting accountableness to rest, as “on a far stronger and wider basis,”—he does not consider as natural, but as a work of the Spirit of God; and a work of the Spirit, in virtue of the mediation of Jesus Christ. It is to this view of the case that I have to beg your special attention.

The true state of things in regard to man’s knowledge of God and of his law, appears to be this. The knowledge of both was originally possessed. The knowledge of both ought alike to have been retained.

The knowledge of both was to a great extent perverted and lost. And the causes of the perversion and loss were, in regard to both, the same. They were moral causes. When the apostle says "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge," he states a principle which is quite as applicable to the law of God, as to God himself,—to his will, as to his character. We cannot surely marvel, that the two should be found in the same predicament. There is no more reason to wonder at the perversion of the law, than at the perversion of the truth. It was the will of God that was chiefly obnoxious to the dislike of human depravity. Could his nature have been separated from his will; could his will have been different from his nature; could his will have tolerated evil, while his nature continued holy; could his nature thus have been to man a mere subject of abstract speculation, which did not, in any way, interfere with the gratification of his own evil inclinations:—we could then, without difficulty, have formed the conception of his *will* being perverted into accommodation to the propensities of the human heart, while conceptions sufficiently correct continued to be entertained of his *nature*. But such a supposition manifestly involves the very grossest absurdity and contradiction. God's nature and God's will are correlates; the latter having a necessary correspondence to the former;—so that to "retain *God* in their

knowledge" was to retain the opposite of all the unholy dispositions of their own hearts, the peremptory and uncompromising condemnation of all evil. This is the cause to which, in a manner the farthest possible from flattering to man's moral dignity, the philosophy of the Bible traces the loss of the knowledge of God. And in these circumstances, it cannot be, that the direct bestowment of new information, while the original and permanent means of knowledge are wilfully resisted, should be necessary to constitute a reasonable ground of responsibility. This would be to make the very perversity of man destructive of his accountableness; nay, to make God accountable to man, and lay the Creator under an obligation of justice to undo the effects of the creature's wilful and froward wickedness.

I should have little objection to adopt the statement in page 52:—"Hence it appears, that, according to the views of this inspired writer" (Paul, in his epistle to the Romans), "the sinfulness of men and the knowledge of the divine law are absolutely co-extensive; and, since *all men* are sinners, it inevitably follows that all men have *some* knowledge of the law:"—only I should resist the conclusion, that any knowledge, either of God or of his law, beyond that which man has *naturally* the means of acquiring, is necessary, to constitute a ground for his moral responsibility. If he does not know, he ought

to know; and his ignorance of what he ought to know can never absolve him from his accountability; his ignorance being the result of his dislike to knowledge, and his dislike to knowledge of his fondness for evil, on the free indulgence of which the knowledge was an irksome restraint. But the knowledge of which Mr Gurney speaks is a knowledge which comes from another source than nature,—being a universal result to mankind of the mediation of Jesus Christ,—and imparted by a universal influence of the Holy Spirit. This is the essential principle of his theory, and common to him with other Quakers. The consequences we shall see immediately.

The distinction made by Mr G. between the “universal light” and conscience,—the former meaning the knowledge of the law or “righteous rule,” and the latter the exercise of a judicial function in bringing words and actions to the test of that rule, and giving sentence upon them,—I shall notice more particularly in a little. Meanwhile it may be observed, that, although no one will question the position that “the law is not perceived, and that conscience does not operate, when the intellect is not developed;” that “our moral faculties are bestowed upon us as rational beings; and that wherever reason is dormant, they will of necessity be dormant also;”—yet there appears to be an extraordinary incorrectness, in classing together, as exemplifications of the position,

“infants, idiots, and some of the wildest tribes of
“uncultivated men.” Surely there should be a discrimination here. The two former of these are not subjects of moral accountableness; for, even although the idiocy of the second may have been induced by causes involving a large portion of moral delinquency, for which a fearful account may justly be exacted; yet we cannot but conceive the cessation of accountableness to be synchronous with the cessation of intellect,—irresponsibility with irrationality. But when the Apostle Paul, in speaking of the heathen, says “they are without excuse,” he makes no distinctions between cultivated and uncultivated men. He classes under one description and one condemnation, (though no doubt, as in the case of individuals, admitting of various degrees,) all the tribes of the Gentile world.—Mr Gurney, after classing with infants and idiots, as coming “to a considerable extent” under the same category with them, “some of the wildest tribes of uncultivated men,” proceeds to add: “But no
“sooner do we rise a little higher in the scale of reason, than the moral faculties begin to display themselves.”—Now it would be a problem of no little interest, but certainly of no less difficulty, to determine at what point, in the ascending scale of the development of reason, moral responsibility commences;—what tribes of mankind come within the pale of accountableness, and what tribes have the—

privilege shall I call it?—of being beyond it. Without doubt, “the Judge of all the earth will do right,” forming his judicial estimates of character according to unerring views of all the circumstances of situation. But there are obvious differences between the case of infancy, in which the term of responsibility must vary according to the earliness or the lateness of mental development in individuals, and in tribes and nations of men, whose brutal debasement, consisting in the unresisted sway of their sensual appetites and lusts, has had its origin in moral causes, and displays itself in effects such as are in sad harmony with the general description of heathenism by the pen of the inspired author of the epistle to the Romans. How far the principle we have hinted at in regard to those who have been rendered fatuous by the influence of licentious indulgence, may be applied to such tribes as have sunk, by the operation of similar causes, into a state of intellectual brutality, must be left to infinite wisdom and justice to determine. It is not with such questions I have at present to do. It is with the bearing of such views as Mr Gurney thus advances upon his own doctrine of the “universal light.” If there be a point in “the scale of reason,” amongst the tribes of the human family, at which “the moral faculties *begin to display themselves*,” then, in regard to those who are below that point, what has become of this light,—this universal inward light? Accord-

ing to Mr G. this light is the ground of accountability. If, therefore, the light be universal, so must the accountability be universal. And remember, it is not a general, but an *individual* universality which Mr Gurney, and other Friends in common with him, maintain. The light “lighteth *every man that cometh into the world.*” “Every man that cometh into the world,” then, being a possessor of this light, is, as such, responsible;—and whatever degree of intellectual development Mr G. may conceive to be necessary to moral accountability, must, as a matter of course, to render his theory consistent with itself, be included in this light; else those uncultivated tribes in whom the moral faculties have not “begun to display themselves,” will be in the self-contradictory predicament of *accountable* and *not accountable*.—The force of these remarks will be more apparent immediately, when we notice Mr Gurney’s theory of the origin, or procuring cause, of the universal light.

I have already adverted to the distinction made by Mr Gurney between the *moral light* and *conscience*. He thus expresses it:—“It is a remarkable proof of “the inaccuracy of our moral philosophers, that, “while they so generally admit the universality of “this moral light, they confound it, in terms, with “the faculty of conscience:—whereas it is evident, “that the two things are no more identical, than is

“the law of the land with the *judge* on the bench “who administers it.” Page 56.—He goes on to show, in a way which I am not disposed to controvert, that the perverting influence of the fall has affected, not the law, but the judge,—not the light, but conscience; and he briefly, but clearly and forcibly, states the different modes and degrees in which the perverting influence appears.—Now, suppose we grant Mr G. the correctness of his distinction between conscience and the law; yet, although they are not identical, he will not deny them, as subsisting together in the human bosom, to be correlates, and proportionals to each other. There can be no judge where there is no law. There can, in like manner, be no conscience, where there is no “moral light,” or knowledge of the law. “The law is the *light*,”—says Mr Gurney elsewhere, and the metaphor is in excellent taste,—“the law is the *light*; the conscience is the *eye*.” Now the light is as necessary to vision as the eye, and the eye as necessary as the light. Vision requires both; and the measure of vision is in proportion to the soundness of the eye and the clearness of the light. Does it not, then, follow, that beneath the point at which “the moral faculties begin to develop themselves,” there can be no conscience? It is not a satisfactory answer to this, to say there is “the *germ* of conscience.” The question relates to accountableness. The existence of the *germ* of con-

science in infants and idiots does not constitute them accountable moral agents:—and if, in such “uncultivated tribes” there exists only the latent germ of conscience, while, as a moral faculty, it has not begun to develop itself; then there can be no more than the germ too of the moral light, or knowledge of God’s law. For the law without the judge would be as unavailing as the judge without the law; the light without conscience, as conscience without the light. What would the mere knowledge of the law be, without conscience “accusing or excusing?” We cannot fancy the one without the other. Where the one exists only in its undeveloped germ, so must the other also. And where there is no more than the germ of conscience, and the germ of law, there can be no more than the germ of accountableness; that is, no more real moral responsibility than in infants and idiots.

But, as I have said, in order to our seeing clearly the objectionableness of Mr Gurney’s theory, we must attend more especially to the *source* or *origin* of the “universal light.” This is explicitly and luminously stated in the following paragraph:—
 “The reality and universality of the *law*, or, in other words, of the *light*, being allowed, I would ask, What is it, and whence does it come? Is it, as Lord Bacon imagines, ‘a sparkle of the purity of man’s first estate?’—or is it a work of the Spirit

“—an especial gift, bestowed on the fallen children
 “of Adam, ‘through the redemption that is in Christ
 “Jesus?’ I am persuaded, that the principal reason
 “why Bishop Butler, and other *Christian* philoso-
 “phers, have ascribed this light to our own nature
 “is, that they have confounded it with conscience;
 “which must, of course, be regarded as one of our
 “natural faculties. Distinguish the law from the
 “conscience—the pure infallible guide from the fal-
 “lible and often perverted judge—and we at once
 “perceive, that an enlightening principle, which va-
 “ries in *degree* indeed, but never in *character*,—un-
 “changeably holy, heavenly, divine—without any
 “mixture of error or taint of sin—cannot possibly
 “be inherent by *nature* in the dark and corrupt mind
 “of man. On the broadest scriptural principles, we
 “must trace it *immediately* to God—to the Holy
 “Spirit as the author of true moral illumination—to
 “the Son as the Mediator through whom all spirit-
 “ual blessings flow—to the Father as the only spring
 “of every good and perfect gift. Between the de-
 “claration of Paul that Christ gave himself a ‘*ran-
 “som for all*,’ and that of John, that he ‘*lighteth
 “every man that cometh into the world*,’ there is
 “surely a most satisfactory and delightful accord-
 “ance.” Pages 58, 59.

There is, in such a statement, in as far as it traces
 all moral light, and all the benefits resulting from it,

to the mediation of Christ, something so congenial to the grateful feelings of the Christian—that it may seem like an attempt to reduce the amount of obligation under which mankind lie to the divine Mediator, if we presume to touch it. But to me there appear in it several great and glaring fallacies, to the brief exposure of which I solicit the candid attention of Mr Gurney's own enlightened mind: and, at the same time, the candid attention of you all; for the ground taken by Mr Gurney is that of the Friends in general,—an integral part of their system. The light is represented by Barclay, as “not less universal than “the seed of sin, being *the purchase of his death* who “‘tasted death for every man.’”

1. In the first place, then;—with regard to those “tribes of uncultivated men,” already more than once adverted to, *what is this light?*—When we find it so distinctly, and in terms so elevated as those just cited from Mr Gurney, represented as one of the benefits of Christ's mediation;—and as a benefit bestowed on every individual man, “lighting every man that cometh into the world;”—is it very honourable to the efficiency of the divine Redeemer's mediation, that, in regard to multitudes of men born into the world, and individually subjects of its illumination, this light should be found in fact, agreeably to Mr Gurney's description, leaving the intellect undeveloped,—the reason dark,—the moral faculties,

in consequence, dormant,—and the conscience, if it can be said to exist at all, existing only in its *germ*? —It is an unsatisfactory reply to such questions, which is given indirectly in the closing sentence of the paragraph referred to—“With respect to all such persons, it may be emphatically said, that ‘*the light shineth in darkness, and that the darkness comprehendeth it not.*’”—For, observe of what description of light these words were originally used. It was not an inward but an outward light. It was Christ himself. HE was the true light. He says of himself, “I am come a light into the world.” If *this* light “lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” then the inward light comes from the outward. It is not the inward light that is represented by the Evangelist as shining in darkness; it is the Light from which the inward light is supposed to be derived. But it is of the inward light itself that Mr Gurney speaks. We can readily conceive how a light extraneous to human minds should shine amidst the darkness of those minds, and not be apprehended by them. But in what manner an *internal light*,—a light *in the mind itself*,—imparted there by immediate divine illumination, and imparted universally, to each individual man,—“not inherent by nature in man’s dark and corrupt mind,” but to be “traced *immediately* to God,—to the Holy Spirit as “the author of all true moral illumination—to the Son

“as the mediator through whom all spiritual blessings flow—to the Father, as the only spring and origin of every good and perfect gift;”—how such a light—“unchangeable, holy, heavenly, divine,”—should subsist in the mind, while yet the mind itself remains in a state of both intellectual and moral darkness, neither reason nor conscience developed, but the rational and moral powers alike dormant!—this is a theorem of mysticism, of which it is not for me to attempt the solution.—It is vain to say, that every man has this light “for a time,” that time being, to each, the day of his salvation; for, apart from all abstract reasoning, where, among the “uncultivated tribes” of whom we are at present speaking, is there, in point of fact, to be found the remotest appearance of correspondence between this and reality,—the slightest indications, in the case of each individual, of such temporary possession and subsequent loss,—of a period of enlightenment succeeded by self-induced darkness? Were this at all apparent, there might be some reason in the solution. But Mr G. himself speaks of these tribes as the exemplar of a particular state or stage of society, in which the ignorance is universal and hereditary, passing down from generation to generation, and reigning over all, from childhood to age, with a death-like uniformity;—a darkness in which, even according to his own representation, the light does not shine.

2. In regard to the next, the superior class, in whom “the moral faculties have begun to display themselves,”—that is, with regard to the heathen world at large, the hypothesis makes the inward light, as imparted by the Spirit, in virtue of the mediation of Christ, *the basis of accountableness*.—It is manifest, that there can be no accountableness *without light*. The highest authority has settled this:—“if ye were blind, ye should have no sin.” And it might, indeed, be assumed as a first truth,—a truth of self-evident certainty. In order, then, to accountableness being universal, the light that is necessary to it must be universal. And, according to the hypothesis before us, this light is not conscience,—is not the light of nature; it is direct spiritual illumination from God, on the ground of the mediation of his Son. It clearly follows, that *the very accountableness of men arises from the mediation of Christ, inasmuch as it arises from the possession of a light imparted on the ground of this mediation*.—Now, this is, in the strict, literal, etymological sense of the term, *preposterous*. It is first last, and last first. We are accustomed, on the surest grounds, to regard the mediation of Christ, as occasioned and rendered necessary by the sinfulness and guilt of men; as designed to provide deliverance for them from this state of sin and condemnation,—the pardon of their guilt, and the renovation of their hearts. But according

to this most extraordinary theory, it is Christ's mediation that places men in circumstances of responsibility,—procuring for them the light that is necessary to constitute them responsible. So that, since there can be *no guilt* where there is *no responsibility*, the very mediation which by the Scriptures is represented as the divine means of saving men from guilt, is in truth the origin of the very guilt from which it is appointed to save;—and, since the universality claimed for the inward light includes all generations as well as all countries, thus it has been from the beginning! If there be any fallacy in this conclusion, I do not perceive it. There must be light before there can be accountableness; there must be accountableness, before there can be guilt; there must be guilt before there can be mediation. But, according to this theory, the last is first. The mediation procures the light; founds the responsibility; gives origin to the guilt; and then saves from it!

3. Even on the supposition that these anomalies could be harmonized, it is “passing strange” to identify *this* light,—the light which consists in the knowledge of the law or “righteous rule” of duty, with *Christ himself*. It is of Christ himself that the evangelist John says—“That was the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” Now, whatever be the meaning of the words (an inquiry which may come before us by and by),

whatever, I say, be their meaning in application to Christ himself, there is a previous question, whether Christ and the inward light, the moral light, the universal light, for which Mr Gurney contends, be *the same thing*.—That the Friends in general, in the entire strain of their phraseology, speak of them as if they were, is a matter of fact, respecting which there can be no doubt. The hostility of their system to all that is merely *external* (which may be regarded as its leading characteristic) naturally tends to this. Let me not be misunderstood. Opposition to mere externality in all that relates to religious service, is right. “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth:”—and as the requisition of spiritual worship is not here founded on any peculiarity of a particular dispensation, but on the very nature and essence of Deity, it must always have been true, whatever might be the external forms under which he ordained his worship to be performed, that spirituality was necessary to his having any complacency in its acts or utterances. But hostility to what is external is carried to a wild extreme, when not only does it set aside outward institutions as means of promoting what is inward, but identifies outward existences with inward principles. The Friends speak of the Christ within, in a manner that leads the mind away from the Christ without. If by the “Christ within” no-

thing more were meant, than the Christ without believed on in the mind, and trusted and loved in the heart, it were well. This is clearly the import of any similar phrases in the New Testament. When Paul says to the Colossians—"Which is *Christ in you* the hope of glory," what more does he mean, than that the Redeemer, who had died for their sins, was the object of their faith and love? How else was it possible for him to be *in* them? The terms are explained (if indeed they can be said to need explanation) when the same apostle mentions it as one of his petitions for the Ephesian believers, "that Christ might *dwell in their hearts by faith.*" For what can this mean, but that Christ, as the object of their faith, should be the object of their fervent and abiding love?—just as, to express the strength of his own affection for his fellow-christians, he says to them—"I have you *in my heart*;" "ye are *in our hearts*, to die and to live with you." Phil. i. 7. 2 Cor. vii. 3.—But is this the sense in which the Friends are wont to speak of the Christ within?—A more general reply to this question I reserve for another letter. At present I have to do with the sentiments and language exclusively of Joseph John Gurney; and shall not, therefore, by quoting from others, even seem to make him responsible for their views. He has, to no inconsiderable extent, modified the phraseology of Quakerism; and the modifi-

cation of its phraseology is the consequence of a modification of its principles. Yet what, on the present subject, is his own language?—"In a former chapter, I have called the attention of the reader to the doctrine, that a measure of the Spirit of the Son of God is bestowed upon all mankind; and I have endeavoured to show it to be in reference to his spiritual appearance in the hearts of his creatures, that Christ is styled the '*true light*, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.'" Pages 76, 77. It is evident, that, in this phraseology, Christ's "spiritual appearance in the hearts of his creatures" corresponds to the "Christ within" in the ordinary nomenclature of Quakerism. Now what is this "spiritual appearance in the hearts of his creatures," in the case of those *who have never heard of him*? In giving his exposition of John i. 9. to which we may hereafter advert, Mr Gurney, after explaining verse 4. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men," as referring to "the Word" previously to his being "made flesh," and as meaning—"that the Son, or Word, of God, or the Messiah, in his original and divine character, was the giver of eternal life, and the spiritual *quickener* and *illuminator* of the children of men," subjoins, in a distinct paragraph—pages 38, 39. "Since such appears to be the true meaning of verse 4. we cannot reasonably hesitate in our interpretation of verse 9. In the

“former, the light is said to be *in* or *by* the Word ;
 “in the latter, according to a very usual figure of
 “speech, the Word, being the source of the light, is
 “himself denominated ‘Light.’ The *light*, in either
 “case, must be of the same character ; and, if there
 “be any correctness in the view we have now taken
 “of the whole passage, it can be no other than *the*
 “*light of the Spirit of the Son of God*. Hence,
 “therefore, I conclude, on the authority of the apos-
 “tle John, that *a measure of the light of the Spirit*
 “*of the Son of God ‘lighteth every man that cometh*
 “*into the world.’*”

I presume Mr Gurney will readily admit that having “a measure of the light of the Spirit” is equivalent to having a measure of the Spirit itself,—the Spirit imparting the light. Now, in Scripture phraseology, having the Spirit of Christ, and having Christ,—having the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, and having Christ dwelling in us, are expressions significant of the same privilege, and are employed interchangeably :—“But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that *the Spirit of God dwell in you* : now if any man *have not the Spirit of Christ*, he is none of his. And if *Christ be in you*, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness : and if *the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you*, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mor-

tal bodies by *his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*" It will follow, that to speak of the heathen as having the Spirit of Christ in them is the same as to speak of their having Christ in them. And this brings Mr Gurney's phraseology into a near approximation to the current language of the Quaker body. There is in it a great deal more of moderation, rationality, and consistency, than in the views respecting the inward light, promulgated by the more primitive, but, till now, standard writers of that body; and incomparably more than in the crude, indiscriminating, and incomprehensible style of writing and talking on this subject, prevalent amongst every-day Friends. Meantime observe, to what, according to Mr Gurney, this "light of the Spirit" amounts. When presenting what he conceives to be special instances of extraordinary light among the heathen, he says—pages 61, 62—"These may be regarded as rare instances; but "they are far from being solitary ones. They may "at least serve the purpose of showing the nature "and origin of that law by which the natural sciences of men are illuminated, and by which they "may be rectified. It appears to be a doctrine truly "consistent with the scope and tenor of Scripture, "and with the *breadth* of that foundation which is "laid in Zion,—even the foundation of Jesus Christ "and him crucified, that as every man born into the "world receives a measure of moral light, so every

“man born into the world has his *day* of spiritual “visitation.”—The light, then, for which Mr Gurney contends, is simply “the law by which the conscience “is illuminated,” “moral light,”—elsewhere denominated by him “a manifestation of the divine law, accompanied with a portion of quickening and purifying power”—page 40, and in former editions of the same work, in terms for which these have been substituted, “a moral sense of right and wrong, accompanied with a portion of quickening and redeeming power.”

Now, although I am sensible, that, were I to quote from others, I might find ground on which my objections would appear in much greater force, yet I keep to Mr Gurney.

Be it remembered, then, in the first place, that the light for which Mr G. contends, as possessed, in a measure by “every man that cometh into the world,” is not, in any degree, *natural*. It exists not in any man *by nature* ; and is not by nature attainable. It is imparted, in each individual man, by the immediate illumination of the Spirit of God.—Two questions, then, here suggest themselves. *First*, is it not somewhat strange, to admit that by nature we have conscience, while we have not, by nature, any portion of the knowledge by which alone, it is granted, conscience can be of any use?—a “natural faculty” altogether unaccompanied by any of the means of its

exercise!—an eye by nature, but no light by nature! Is this consistent? Is it reasonable? Is there any thing else analogous to it in the works of God, and especially amongst the endowments of his rational creatures? If by the fall we had lost entirely that knowledge by which alone conscience can operate, I see not, for my own part, how we could have retained the faculty;—any more than we could have had even the least conception of what an eye is, if the moment that sin entered, light had disappeared.—Why suppose the faculty retained, and the means of its exercise lost?—the eye kept, and the light gone? If we have the one by nature, why not the other?

“Although the knowledge of this holy law,” says Mr Gurney, “is bestowed upon us as rational creatures, it is not a matter of reason; it is instinctive —the immediate gift of God. The law shines in the soul by its own uncreated light, and bears its own evidence. Like the axioms in mathematics, or the first truths in natural philosophy, it neither requires proof nor admits of it; it consists of intuitive and unchanging principles.” Page 54. I am not about to enter here into the metaphysics of this curious and somewhat difficult question, as to the origin of our notions of right and wrong, and moral obligation. What I am now at a loss about is, the consistency of affirming any thing to be

“instinctive” and “intuitive,” and yet not natural, but requiring, in order to the possession of it, the immediate illumination of the Spirit of God; the consistency of affirming that such immediate illumination is necessary to the knowledge of God’s law, and, at the same time, that that law “shines in the soul by its own uncreated light;” of affirming any of our instinctive and intuitive principles to be supernaturally bestowed upon us, in virtue of the mediation of Jesus Christ,—and what is self-evident as “the axioms in mathematics,” to need more than nature’s powers to discover and discern it. The ancient and modern philosophers, whom Mr Gurney quotes in support of his positions, had nothing in their minds, when they spoke of the instinctive and intuitive character of our notions of right and wrong, beyond the *light of nature*,—a light which, on the present subject, Mr Gurney pronounces to be darkness. Were it worth while to analyse the sentences he quotes, we should find them all against him. The very first of those philosophers, Dr Reid, says—“The first principles of morals are *immediate dictates of the moral faculty*.” Now the moral faculty, in Dr Reid’s nomenclature, is *conscience*. But, according to Mr Gurney, conscience, though admitted to be a natural faculty, no more dictates moral principles, than the eye produces the light by which it sees, or than the judge enacts the law by which he

decides. When Dr Reid further says—"The Supreme Being has given us this light within to direct our moral conduct. It is the candle of the Lord, set up within us to guide our steps;"—he still means conscience:—but in Mr Gurney's theory, conscience is not the candle, but the eye that sees by means of it. The image, as used by Dr Reid, is self-consistent; every one understanding the "candle set up within us to guide our steps," as comprehending the joint existence of light and an eye to use it. But the natural conscience of Mr G. is the anomaly of an eye without light.

When Mr Gurney pronounces it impossible that the light for which he pleads should be "*inherent by nature* in the dark and corrupt mind of man," a *second* question occurs:—does he mean by the light any thing more than *simple knowledge*? This, it is evident, is all that is requisite, in order to the operation of conscience. And it is equally evident, that such knowledge may exist in any mind, however morally corrupt and dark. A law may be known, and yet hated; perfectly known and perfectly hated. If, on the contrary, he means by the light any *right disposition of heart* towards the law,—the divine law, in its divine spirituality,—then, I grant him his position that it belongs not to man's fallen nature, but must be the product of God's enlightening and sanctifying Spirit. That he does in-

clude something of this kind appears from his words —“a manifestation of the divine law, *accompanied with a portion of quickening and purifying power.*” Has every man, then, who is born into the world, a portion of the quickening and purifying power of the Holy Spirit? If so, it will follow, that, among all the tribes of mankind, we are not in possession of any fair specimen of the powers of unassisted nature, in regard to the discovery of God and duty, and the influence of what is thus discovered ;—that, forming a judgment from the aggregate facts in the religious history of the world, this universal divine communication of spiritual light and power, in virtue of the Redeemer’s mediation, has either been wonderfully stinted, or as wonderfully inefficient ; and that the apostle’s argument respecting the ground of the responsibility of the Gentiles is founded in a fallacy,—inasmuch as, the knowledge of the law not being attainable by nature, there can be none who “do by nature the things contained in the law :”—for how can they *do* by nature what they cannot *know* by nature? It cannot, with any propriety of speech, be said, that they either know or do such things by nature, when they are both known and done by the immediate illumination and influence of the Spirit of Christ. And, indeed, there is nothing that can more satisfactorily evince the untenableness of Mr Gurney’s hypothesis on this subject, than the necessity

to which it reduces him of confounding to such a degree things that differ, as to advance the position, that "when the apostle makes mention of the Gentiles "performing the works of righteousness '*by nature*,' "he cannot be understood as alluding to nature *unassisted by divine grace*." Page 32, Note. If the apostle does not allude to "nature unassisted by grace," I should say he does not allude to nature at all. Nature assisted by grace ceases to be nature. It becomes something more,—something *supernatural*; and by combining in itself the very things contrasted, it destroys the contrast; for what are grace and nature, if they do not mean the *assisted* and the *unassisted* powers of man? Yet Mr Gurney alleges, that "the state of nature is placed in opposition, not to a "state of grace, but only to one of outward light and "instruction." Now that it is contrasted with a state of outward light and instruction, is true; but that the absence of *outward* light and instruction is *all* that is meant in the phrase "*by nature*," I cannot admit. The supposition of immediate supernatural *inward* light and instruction is surely just as incompatible with the idea of "*a state of nature*" as that of *outward* light and instruction is. It depends, indeed, on the *amount* of this direct illumination of the Spirit, whether it be not a superior privilege to the mere possession of an external revelation. We can readily enough conceive of its going so far, as even

to surpass this in value. At all events, "*by nature*" cannot reasonably be understood as meaning *by grace*, or, which is the same thing, by nature *with supernatural aid*. Does the same phrase include any thing of the kind, when Paul says elsewhere, "We were *by nature* children of wrath, even as others?" His subsequent explanation teaches us the contrary: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (*by grace* ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Eph. ii. 4—6. Does not the apostle, in these words, confine the idea of "*grace*" and "*quickening*," to the dispensation of the gospel? Does he not warrant our considering a state of nature as, in his phraseology, the proper *contrast* to a state of grace, and not (as Mr Gurney's hypothesis makes it) a state of grace itself?

It is an admitted rule in philosophy, that we should not introduce more causes than are sufficient to account for the phenomena. The rule is of equally legitimate authority in our investigations of the moral condition of intelligent creatures, as in those of the physical constitution of the universe. Now, there does not to me appear to be any thing in the apostle Paul's statement regarding the Gentiles, that requires more to account for it than what may fairly be con-

sidered as belonging to every man *by nature*; nothing in it which renders it at all necessary to suppose a direct and universal operation of the Holy Spirit:—and if so, that there is no need for having recourse to an interpretation of the phrase “*by nature*” so *unnatural* as that of Mr Gurney,—in which there is so obvious a confounding of nature and grace. I cannot but think, that Mr Gurney himself will see the propriety of keeping nature and grace distinct, if the apostle’s representation can be satisfactorily explained without confounding them. Now, surely, there is no reason for our putting any stronger construction on his representation of the Gentiles, as “doing by nature the things contained in the law,” than is necessary to the validity of his conclusions. Nothing, then, can be more certain, than that by such terms he does not mean that the Gentiles did *all* the things contained in the law; that they rendered it a complete obedience,—that they fulfilled it. It were a waste of time to prove this. No man in his sound mind will question it. And if the terms are capable of one restriction, they are equally so of another:—it is not at all necessary to the apostle’s reasoning to interpret them as implying that even of those “things contained in the law” which the Gentiles by nature do, *any* are done from such principles, or such a state of heart, as to render the doing of them truly good and acceptable in the sight of God. To this,

the true love of God is indispensable; and to the true love of God, the true knowledge of him. It is quite enough for the apostle's argument, that, in their conduct, in the "witness-bearing" of their "consciences," and in their "reasonings" (λογισμων) on morals and jurisprudence, the Gentiles evince a sense of right and wrong,—convictions in their minds of sin and duty,—with any corresponding approbation or disapprobation, self-satisfaction or remorse, when, by their neighbours or by themselves, the one or the other has been done. "When at any time, any
 "amongst them, in any part of their conduct, pay
 "regard to the claims of humanity and justice, of
 "natural affection and of general benevolence, in
 "opposition to the influence of contrary principles,
 "they make it apparent that, although without the
 "written law, they 'are a law unto themselves, and
 "'show the work of the law written in their hearts.'
 "There the law of God was originally written; and
 "although, by the fall, the impression of the divine
 "hand-writing has been mournfully defaced and cor-
 "rupted, yet it has never been entirely obliterated.
 "In regard, indeed, to right dispositions of heart,—
 "to the principles of godliness,—to truly spiritual
 "and holy desires and affections, the obliteration is
 "complete; no traces of the original characters re-
 "main. But the law itself has not been thoroughly
 "erased from the mind, however entirely the heart

“ may have lost the disposition to keep it. The er-
 “ roneousness and debasement of the conceptions of
 “ moral good and evil prevalent among the heathen,
 “ have arisen from the very same cause to which the
 “ apostle traces their ignorance of God himself. The
 “ source of their dislike to the only true God was,
 “ the opposition of his pure and holy character to
 “ the pollutions of their fallen nature. And we need
 “ not surely wonder, that the same depravity should
 “ have produced, as far as the remaining light and
 “ power of reason would admit, the perversion and
 “ partial oblivion of that law, which is ‘ holy and just
 “ and good,’—condemning their trespasses, working
 “ wrath, and filling them with a ‘ fearful looking-for
 “ of judgment.’ By all such voluntary erasement of
 “ the law of God from their minds, deep guilt has
 “ been contracted. But still, the original impression
 “ is not gone.”*—The inward workings and outward
 indications of conscience;—the entire procedure of
 heathen courts of justice;—the moral writings of
 some of their most eminent philosophers;—the rea-
 sonings of suspected or accused transgressors, to
 maintain their characters by clearing themselves of
 the imputation of crime, or by excusing and palli-

* Sermons on Man’s Accountableness for his Belief, and the
 Responsibility of the Heathen, pages 53, 54. To this small
 volume the author must refer the reader for a more enlarged
 exposition of his views on this very interesting subject.

ating their culpable conduct;—along with various other evidences, all concur to prove the existence of what has been termed *the law of nature*. And to my own mind it appears abundantly clear, that nothing more than *nature* is necessary to account for all the phenomena; and that to interpret *nature* in the apostle's reasoning, as meaning *nature assisted by grace*, is to confound things that differ, as well as to introduce a cause of which the operation is not at all required.

And this leads me to observe, still farther, that the charge of confounding things that differ applies with no less force to the identification, in kind though not in degree, of the blessing thus bestowed upon the heathen with that promised in the new covenant, and enjoyed by the spiritual subjects of that covenant:—"I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." "This law of God "written in the heart," says Mr Gurney, "can be "nothing less than a divine illumination; and the "larger measures of such illumination are described "in the very same terms, as one of the choicest "blessings of the Christian dispensation: Jer. xxxi. "33." Page 32, Note.—This is surprising. In the passage on which we have been commenting—Rom. ii. 14, 15.—the apostle is contrasting the condition of the Jews who had the written law, with that of the Gentiles who had it not. Now the possession by the

Jews of the written law was the possession simply of *the means of knowing the divine will*. The possession, as the entire context shows, has no reference whatever to the state of the heart,—and implies nothing of any right disposition towards that will. If the contrast, therefore, be at all fair, what is said of the Gentiles must also have a simple reference to *the means of knowing the divine will* possessed by *them*. It must not be considered as inclusive of *moral disposition*. For to interpret it thus, would introduce on the one side of the contrast what has no place in the other; it would set it at variance with the entire description of the practical character of the Gentile world; and it would, moreover,—contrary to the whole spirit and scope of the apostle's reasoning,—assign to the Gentiles a *higher privilege* than that set in contrast with it as bestowed upon the Jews. The Jews had the written law,—the law *in the Book*:—but if the Gentiles, who had not that law, had the law *in the heart*, in the same sense in which this blessing is promised in the new covenant, although not in the same degree,—who will deny that they had a privilege of higher value; inferior means of knowledge with a right disposition of heart, being, beyond question, more excellent than a superior measure of the former without the latter. I proceed on the assumption of what Mr Gurney will not dispute, that the terms of promise in the new covenant

do include *disposition* as well as knowledge,—or, in other words, the “new heart” and “new spirit,” the “heart of flesh” that comes in the room of the “stony heart,”—which are elsewhere specified as the blessings of the same covenant.—That the contrast in the passage relates to the means of knowledge, is further evident from the very object which the apostle has in view, which is to establish the principle that *responsibility is according to privilege*; and that, “in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ,” the truth of the position he had just laid down,—that “there is no respect of persons with God,”—would be manifested in the fact of the judgment being conducted upon that principle:—“As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.” But this can have no reference to *disposition*, or state of heart; inasmuch as that forms no part of the standard or rule of judgment, but of the character to which the standard or rule is to be applied.—When God, in the new covenant, the spiritual covenant of the gospel, gives the gracious promise, “I will put my laws in their minds and in their hearts will I write them,” he promises what is essentially *regeneration*; not only a mind to know, but a heart to love, his law,—even that law of which the first precept demands supreme love to himself. To suppose “every man born into

the world" a possessor, by the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, of this new covenant blessing, is to suppose "every man born into the world," to the extent in which he does possess it, a regenerate or new man! How far this is in accordance with the very plainest representations of Scripture—"judge ye."

I cannot help thinking, that Mr Gurney ascribes to the law, and to the knowledge of the law, effects which, according to apostolic statement, it is not fitted to produce. He says—"The conscience, indeed, "like every other faculty of the human mind, is *prone* "to perversion, and the law written in the heart is "given, not only to enlighten but to rectify it." Page 33. Now, whence is it, that the conscience is "prone to perversion?" It is owing to the state of the heart. In order, therefore, to its being "rectified," that which perverts it must be rectified. If by the "law written in the heart," Mr Gurney intends such a writing as includes the rectification of the heart, or the impartation to it of a right disposition towards the law, his position is indeed correct; but then, he is embarrassed by all the difficulties we have just been mentioning. And if by the "law written in the heart" he means no more than the *knowledge of the law*, then will it not be easy to reconcile his position, that it is given to rectify the conscience, with the tendency of such knowledge, operating on human corruption, as stated by the inspired apostle

Paul. According to him, it works rebellion, and works wrath.—It works *rebellion*,—the authoritative restrictions and prohibitions of the law fretting and irritating, and stimulating to resistance, the latent principles of corruption. Hence he speaks of “the motions of sins which were by the law, working in the members” of those who are still “in the flesh,” “to bring forth fruit unto death;” and of “sin, taking occasion by the commandment, working in himself,” when he was yet unregenerate, “all manner of concupiscence.”—And it “works *wrath*,” because “by the law is the knowledge of sin:”—so that the clearer and fuller the knowledge of the law, the clearer and fuller will be the sinner’s knowledge and consciousness of the amount of his guilt, and the more vivid and alarming his apprehensions of the coming wrath. To sinners, as all mankind are, the law is “the ministration of condemnation.” Fear and death are its attendants. There is no grace in it, and no hope. It can hardly be a privilege to know it, unless with that knowledge there comes also the knowledge of the way of salvation. And to me it appears a very preposterous thing, to represent that which “worketh wrath,” as, *by itself*, one of the benefits of the Redeemer’s mediation!*

I should now call your attention, and especially

* See Note at the end of this Letter.

that of Mr Gurney himself, to the bearing of the view taken by him of the meaning of the apostle's words in Rom. ii. on the gospel doctrine of justification. This, however, is a subject of such paramount importance, that I mean to assign to it a distinct letter, —perhaps more.—Meanwhile, entreating Mr Gurney's forgiveness if, in any point, I have unwittingly misrepresented his sentiments, or deduced from them any conclusions which are not legitimate, I remain,

Yours respectfully,

R. W.

NOTE referred to towards the close of the preceding Letter.

The Responsibility of the Heathen is a subject of the deepest interest,—the discussion of it involving that of the great principles of the divine government. I have referred the reader for my views of this subject, to a separate publication. From that little volume I may here present an extract or two; from which, though imperfectly, he may form a judgment of the principles maintained in it, and compare them, not merely with his own, but with the dictates of the Sacred volume; our harmony in sentiment with each other being, comparatively, of little moment,—but our agreement with God being of the last importance; that we may not be found either “charging Him foolishly,” or “vindicating his ways” on principles which have not the sanction of his word.

“To come at once to the text of our discourse. I can conceive to myself nothing plainer:—‘As many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be JUDGED BY THE LAW.’”

“Nor is it in the text only that these principles are recognised. The spirit of them pervades the whole of the sacred volume; and in many places of it they are affirmed with no less explicitness than in the words before us. For example: Luke xii. 47, 48. ‘And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.’—John ix. 39—41. ‘And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.’—John xv. 22—24. ‘If I had not come and

spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.'—Matth. xi. 20—24. 'Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.'

"From these and other passages, we lay it down, without hesitation, as the doctrine of Scripture, as it is also the evident dictate of reason,—that responsibility is according to privilege,—that the punishment of offences by the judgment of a righteous God, will be exactly proportionate to the extent in which the means have been enjoyed of the knowledge both of duty and of the obligations to its performance."

"If the Bible condemned men for their ignorance of what they never heard of,—for not receiving a revelation which they had no opportunity of knowing,—for not obeying a law which never was promulgated to them,—for failing to accept a message of mercy which never reached their ears;—the objection I am considering would be more than plausible; it would be valid,—it would be insurmountable. It would be far more than difficult,—it would be utterly impossible, on any sound principles, 'to vindicate the ways of God to men.' The Book that contained such principles could not come from Him who is 'a God of truth, and without iniquity.'—But indeed it is not so. The representation is an impious slander on the Bible. No such

principles of unrighteousness are any where to be found in it. And I would again put it to the conscience and the candour of any infidel, whether a fairer principle can be imagined than that which is laid down in the text and in the other passages that have been quoted? In conducting judgment on such a principle, does not the blessed God fully sustain the character which the same Book gives of him—‘Just and right is He?’ Sin he hates, and is determined to punish. He has published the determination. But he has, at the same time, assured us, that he will weigh, in an even balance, all extenuating as well as all aggravating circumstances, and pronounce his judicial sentences accordingly.—And what more than this can any reasonable man desire? So far from being a ground of objection and cavil, ought not the explicit recognition of such a principle, as the rule by which the divine procedure is to be regulated, to recommend the Book which contains it, as giving just and worthy views of ‘the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness?’”

“I have thus endeavoured to show you the *principles*, according to which, the Scriptures assure us, the judgments of the Divine Tribunal are to be conducted. And I wish to impress it strongly on your minds, that beyond the *ascertaining of principles* it is not ours to go. We dare not attempt it. If you ask me to *apply* these principles, I am silent, and resolute in silence. This is beyond our legitimate province. It would be an arrogant and impious assumption of a prerogative exclusively divine. If you begin, therefore, to *name individuals*, and to press me with inquiries what is to become of *them*—I have but one reply:—You are going beyond your limits. You are not the judges. You know not enough of the cases and the characters,—not even of any one case or character,—to fit you for such decision. It is enough for you to be assured of the *principles of judgment*, and of the application of these principles being in the hands of an omniscient, unerring, independent, and impartial Judge. *There* you must leave all questions as to individuals. ‘The Judge of all the earth will do only that which is right.’ No one, you may surely rest satisfied, shall find any ground of com-

plaint at the Tribunal of 'the Holy One and the Just.' Is the amount of your confidence in God (I again ask you) so very small, that you cannot trust him for this?—that you will not be satisfied with the explicit declaration of principles, but will insist on his disclosing to you the results of their application to individual characters, or on his endowing you with omniscience, to enable you to make this application yourselves?

“But a heavy load, I will suppose, after all that has been said, still presses upon your minds; you still urge the anxious inquiry—*But may not the Heathen be saved? Is their salvation, without the knowledge of revelation, impossible? Is there no hope for them?*

“I have no wish to dismiss such questions lightly. It would show a want of all becoming sensibility, not to participate in the solicitude which they express. In attempting any reply to them, I must begin by inquiring,—What do you mean when you ask, ‘May not the heathen be saved?’—There is a vagueness in the question, of which, possibly, you are not sensible.—When you say, May not the heathen be saved?—do you mean to ask whether *all* the heathen may be saved, whatever have been their principles, and whatever their character? I will not suppose you can mean this. It would be an insult to your good sense. The doctrine that would make salvation independent of present principles and present character in the case of the *heathen*, must of necessity, (if those who maintain it would be consistent with themselves) make salvation independent of principles and character as to *all mankind*. And with a doctrine such as this,—if any shall be found so foolish and so presumptuous as to entertain it,—we have at present nothing to do.

“Again, then, I ask—Do you mean by the question, whether, if a heathen can be found, who has thought, and felt, and acted, fully up to the light which he has enjoyed,—who has in every thing lived agreeably to that light, whatever the measure of it may have been,—whether *that* heathen may be saved?—then I answer, without the hesitation of a moment, YES—*most assuredly*. The text clearly implies it. We know that if those who *had* the law *kept the law perfectly*, then they would have been

saved by it; for the Scripture expressly saith, ‘The man that doeth these things shall live by them.’ Such persons would have been *sinless* in *their* circumstances;—and if any one of those who are ‘*without law*’ were found *sinless* in *his* circumstances, he could not perish; for the text lays down the principle, that it is only *such as have sinned*, in whatever circumstances, that shall perish. It clearly follows, that if a heathen be found, who has, in all respects, lived according to the light he has enjoyed, he shall *not* perish. Point out the man, and we have divine authority for pronouncing him safe. The doctrine of the text is, that he is to be judged according to his circumstances,—‘according to what he *hath*, and not according to what he *hath not*:’—in the case supposed, he comes up to this test:—he cannot, therefore, be condemned,—he cannot perish.

“But there is still another question:—Even those who believe the gospel are not by the faith of it perfectly freed from sin; they are only delivered from its predominant power, from the love and the indulgence of it; so that, with various degrees of remaining corruption, *prevailing holiness* becomes their distinguishing character:—is your meaning, then, whether, if a heathen were to be found, understanding and believing those views of God which nature teaches,—humbly and seriously feeling their influence,—and living accordingly,—not a life, as in the former supposition, of *sinless* conformity to his principles, but, as in the case of the christian believer, a life of such predominant goodness as the lessons which he actually has, the truths which he has learned from the volume of nature, are fitted to produce;—whether, if such a man were found, he might not be saved?—I freely answer, *I am not prepared to deny that he might*. And if any shall think these terms, in such a case, unduly cautious and measured,—I will go a step further, and say, the *spirit* of the text appears to imply, if its words do not directly express, a principle that would warrant our answering *this* question too in the *affirmative*.—Divine instruction is contained, if I may so express myself, *in two volumes*,—the volume of *nature*, and the volume of *revelation*. The text expressly declares,—what accords with the dictates of reason and with every natural sentiment of justice,—

that they who are not in possession of the latter are not to be judged by it. If, therefore, any one can be found, who learns aright what is taught in *the only volume he has*, and who is rightly and habitually, though not perfectly, *influenced by what he learns*, —(for to insist on the *perfection* of such influence would, as I have just before noticed, be to require more than is required in the case of the believer of the lessons of the *other* volume, the volume of revelation)—I see not, in such a case, how either the spirit or the letter of my text could justify me in affirming his condemnation;—for then, in opposition to what the text so plainly teaches us, his sentence would proceed on the ground of his *not being influenced* by what he had *no opportunity to know*.

“In granting, however, this general position, I must request the special attention of my hearers, to the following observations, as its necessary qualifying accompaniments:—

“*In the first place*: I repeat, as of particular consequence to be borne in mind, I am only *laying down principles*. With the *personal application* of these principles I have nothing to do. That, as I have said, must rest in a higher quarter,—in the hands of the only competent Judge. In my present reasonings, all is hypothetical. *If* such a person is to be found, we may entertain good hopes of his future well-being.

“*Secondly*: The supposition of such a person’s salvation is not by any means to the exclusion, in the hypothetical case, of either the *influences of the Spirit of God*, or the *virtue of the Redeemer’s atonement*.—With regard to the former; since both the volume of nature and the volume of revelation are divine, there is surely nothing either inconceivable or incongruous in the idea of the Holy Spirit operating on the minds of men by the truths contained in the one, as well as by those contained in the other. The truths indeed of the former volume are truths which are assumed and repeated in the latter,—although the principal lessons of the latter are discoveries peculiar to itself, beyond those of the former, and far transcending them in interest and glory. But still, the Spirit of God may, without the slightest inconsistency or disparagement, be conceived to impart his influence for giving the right discernment and the proper efficacy

of those lessons that are *common* to nature and revelation, as well as of those which are *peculiar* to the latter. When the New Testament dispensation is distinguished as the 'ministration of the Spirit,'—and when such language is used as, 'the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified,'—we are not to understand, that there was *no Divine influence* previous to the fulness of time and the clear discoveries of the gospel; but only that, under the gospel, the *degree* of that influence was to be so extraordinary and unprecedented, as to form a distinctive characteristic of the new era. Both the miraculous power and saving energy of the Spirit were in requisition from the beginning, for giving evidence and efficacy to the truth of God. But when Christ had finished his work,—when he 'ascended on high leading captivity captive, and received gifts for men,' the effusion was beyond all example abundant in its measure, and glorious in its effects.—On the same principle, when we speak of the Spirit operating by the truths of revelation, it might be meant, not that his operation was *exclusively* or *without exception* by their instrumentality, but only in a degree and with a frequency so transcendently superior, as to be fairly and strikingly distinctive and characteristic. The truths taught by nature are also taught by revelation: and the question is, whether, as taught by nature, that is, by themselves, unconnected with the peculiar discoveries of the inspired volume, God has ever been pleased to honour them with the accompaniment of his Spirit, and so to make them the instrumental means of spiritual benefit to the souls of men. And on this question I would by no means venture to affirm any thing with confidence. Whilst the supposition involves nothing either impossible or unworthy of the Divine Agent,—yet it may be regarded as at least dubious in point of fact, whether the Spirit ever does make use of the truths taught by the light of nature alone, for renewing hearts, and bringing erring men back to God. When the apostle says, —'After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe,' his language certainly favours the contrary supposition. It seems to intimate, that it was God's design, to

give a full and fair trial to the unassisted powers of human reason: and the trial, during the whole period of it, and over all the extent of its field, having issued in a total failure, then he comes forward with his new instrument, the peculiar discoveries of the gospel, the doctrines of the cross. These he accompanies with his spiritual agency, and proves them to be, though foolishness in the eyes of the wise men of this world, ‘the power of God unto salvation.’—Still, however, on the principles above mentioned, this and similar passages might signify not the *absolute exclusion*, but only the *very great rarity*, of divine influence accompanying the truths in the volume of nature. I do not think that inspired authority pronounces any unqualified decision of the question.

“With regard again to the atonement of Christ, the question comes to be, whether there be any impossibility or contradiction in the supposition of its saving virtue extending to any who are necessarily ignorant of it? I hold it as a scriptural principle, in regard to our apostate world, that ‘there is *no salvation in any other*’ than the revealed Mediator; and that all consequently who *are* finally saved must owe their salvation to his atonement and intercession. The whole countless multitude of the redeemed shall sing one song—‘Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!’ Personal worthiness, and self-salvation, will have no place in the thoughts of any one mind in that vast assembly. ‘CHRIST will be all, and in all.’ But the question is, whether the merits of Christ can, in any case, extend, in their saving virtue, beyond the actual knowledge of him? And in answer to this question, the case of *infants* immediately presents itself. We believe the mediation of Christ to be available to *their* salvation, although they are incapable of knowing, understanding, and believing the divine testimony. There is a close parallelism between their case and that of the Heathen;—the sole difference being, that in the one the ignorance arises from *incapacity*, and in the other from *situation*; and these, where the situation is not the result of choice, are, in all that affects moral responsibility, evidently on a level.

“Still, however, let it not be forgotten, all this is *hypothetical*.

Of particular facts, or of the salvation of individuals, we can affirm nothing. We only say—*If—if* such persons *have* existed, or *do* exist.

“ I recur to the general position, that the *principle of judgment* laid down in the text is that of perfect unimpeachable equity, and repeat my appeal for this to the understanding and conscience of every hearer. If you are satisfied of the rectitude of the principle, leave the Heathen (for surely you may do so with confidence) in the hands of that Supreme Judge, who has announced this as the unalterable law of his procedure, and who, in its impartial application, will do none of his creatures wrong. Be thankful for the discovery of the principle, and intrust the application of it to him. To such confidence he is entitled. It is fearful impiety to withhold it.”

LETTER V.

ON THE GOSPEL DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

THE subject with which, in the close of my last letter, I proposed to open this, is one, as then stated, of paramount importance. All men are sinners:—that is, they are transgressors of the divine law; for “sin is the transgression of the law,” and “where no law is, there is no transgression.” As sinners, or transgressors of the law, all are under the law’s sentence of condemnation—“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them:”—“The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” In these circumstances, there cannot be an inquiry of more momentous interest, than the inquiry how sinners may obtain forgiveness, and find acceptance with God?—To furnish a satisfactory answer to this inquiry is one of the first designs of the Gospel. Leaving for subsequent consideration the question, how far the views of Mr Gurney respecting the answer which the gospel does give to

it are in harmony with those of other Quaker writers, and of Friends in general, it is with his views that I have now, in the first instance, to do:—and it is with no ordinary satisfaction that I introduce them, as being, substantially, so coincident with what I conceive to be the doctrines of the inspired volume. It is with delight, indeed, that I enrich my pages with the following brief citations from the midst of much more that is equally excellent.

After quoting portions of that admirable exposition of the ceremonial law, the epistle to the Hebrews, he says:—“ On a “ fair examination of these luminous “ passages, it seems impossible not to confess, on the “ one hand, that the sacrifices of the law were, *in their “ nature, weak and unprofitable*; and, on the other “ hand, that in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, “ there was a *real efficacy for the blotting out of all in- “ iquity*. While, however, we heartily acknowledge “ this blessed truth, and, under a sense of our own “ vileness, gratefully avail ourselves of the ‘ blood of “ the everlasting covenant’ as the only atonement for “ our sins, we ought to exercise a holy caution, lest “ our sentiments on this subject should degenerate into “ *unscriptural and merely heathenish notions of expi- “ atory sacrifice*.” *—Admirably does he guard against these, and at the same time, vindicate the doctrine of

* Essays on the Evidences, Doctrines, and practical operation of Christianity, pages 414, 415, Essay XI.

atonement from the false aspersions thrown upon it by its Socinian adversaries, as implying the vindictiveness and implacability of the divine nature—

“ Christians have not unfrequently been accused of
 “ assuming, as the foundation of their doctrine of
 “ atonement, the *natural implacability* of God towards
 “ man ; and of holding the notion that God was *ren-*
 “ *dered* placable by the involuntary sufferings of a
 “ harmless, unoffending substitute. That such and
 “ similar statements of the opinions of Christians are,
 “ for the most part, gross misrepresentations, and that
 “ no such views have ever been entertained by any
 “ reflecting or consistent theologian, I am fully per-
 “ suaded. Be that as it may, however, these unques-
 “ tionably are not the views of the atonement pre-
 “ sented to us *in the Bible*. There we plainly learn,
 “ that the incarnation, humiliation, sufferings, and
 “ propitiatory sacrifice, of Christ, were ordained by
 “ the Father himself, as the *means* through which,
 “ in his own infinite knowledge and wisdom, he saw
 “ fit to provide for the satisfaction of his justice, and
 “ at the same time for the pardon and restoration of
 “ a lost and sinful race of his creatures. And these
 “ eternal counsels were so far from being the effect of
 “ any essential implacability in the mind of God,—
 “ that the divine attribute to which they are uni-
 “ formly ascribed in Scripture, is the very opposite
 “ of such a quality. It is placability: it is mercy: it

“is love. ‘God so LOVED the world that he gave his
 “only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him
 “should not perish but have everlasting life.’ John
 “iii. 16. ‘God is love.’ ‘In this was manifested
 “the love of God toward us, because that God sent
 “his only begotten Son into the world, that we might
 “live through him.’ 1 John iv. 8, 9.”*—Again:
 “Now, although a crucified Redeemer is thus clearly
 “revealed to us as the appointed channel of the
 “mercies of God to man, such is the perverseness
 “of our hearts that we are naturally prone to reject
 “him, and even to account the ‘blood of the cove-
 “nant an unholy thing.’ As it was in the days of
 “the Apostle Paul, so it is now—Christ crucified
 “offends the pride of the Jew, and mortifies the false
 “wisdom of the Greek: 1 Cor. i. 23. How many
 “persons are there, whose self-righteousness is far
 “too little broken down to admit of their accepting
 “that divine plan of redemption which involves their
 “own total humiliation, inasmuch as it assumes that
 “they are justly liable to the divine displeasure, ab-
 “solutely devoid of merit, and destitute of all capa-
 “city to be saved, except through the righteousness
 “of *another!*”†—And in the following passages, the
imputation of this righteousness to the believing sin-
 ner, for his justification before God, is maintained

* Ibid. pages 415, 416.

† Ibid. pages 419, 420.

with unequivocal clearness :—“ It is a position very
 “ plainly laid down by the apostle Paul, that we are
 “ *justified* by faith in Christ *without the deeds of the law*,
 “ Rom. iii. 28. or in other words (elsewhere adopted
 “ by him) that ‘ without works,’ *righteousness* is
 “ *imputed* to the believer in Jesus, Rom. iv. 6, 11.
 “ Now, on a comparison of this position with other
 “ scriptural declarations, of some of which the apostle
 “ is himself the author, it is easy to perceive, that
 “ the righteousness imputed to the Christian is no
 “ imaginary innocence and virtue, but the righteous-
 “ ness of the Lord Jesus Christ himself: for it is
 “ Jesus who is described by the prophets as ‘ the
 “ Lord our righteousness,’ Jer. xxiii. 6. comp. Isa.
 “ xlv. 24, 25. Christ Jesus is made unto us, of the
 “ Father, *righteousness* and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30.
 “ ‘ God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew
 “ no sin, that we might *be made the righteousness of*
 “ *God* IN HIM,’ 2 Cor. v. 21.”*—And, when he has
 explained wherein the righteousness of Christ con-
 sists, he thus proceeds—and this quotation must suf-
 fice :—“ Such was the righteousness of the Lord
 “ Jesus Christ; and such is the righteousness, there-
 “ fore, which, through faith, *is imputed to the Chris-*
 “ *tian*. A very slight degree of reflexion on the
 “ divine nature and infinite dignity of the Son of

* Ibid. pages 423, 424.

“ God, as well as on the perfection of his human
 “ character, may serve to convince us, that, as on the
 “ one hand, he was, on account of his spotless inno-
 “ cence, entirely suited to be a sacrifice for sin, so,
 “ on the other hand, his fulfilment of the moral law,
 “ and more especially his obedience unto death, were
 “ infinitely meritorious in the sight of God the Fa-
 “ ther. When, therefore, we read that the righteous-
 “ ness of Jesus Christ is imputed to the believer, we
 “ may reasonably understand such a doctrine to im-
 “ port that we are not only saved through the sacri-
 “ fice of Jesus Christ, but rewarded through *his mer-*
 “ *its*. Our sinfulness may properly be said to have
 “ been *imputed* to Christ, because, when he under-
 “ went the penalty which that sinfulness demanded,
 “ he was dealt with as if he had been himself the
 “ sinner ; and it is, I apprehend, on a perfectly ana-
 “ logous principle, that *his* righteousness is said to
 “ be imputed to us ; because, through the boundless
 “ mercy of God, we are permitted to reap the fruits
 “ of it. We are regarded as if, like him, we were
 “ absolutely guiltless, and are, *therefore*, delivered
 “ from everlasting punishment. We are graciously
 “ accepted, as if, like him, we had meritoriously ful-
 “ filled the whole law of God, and are, *therefore*,
 “ rewarded with never-ending felicity. Thus it is,
 “ that, in consequence of his *union, through faith*,
 “ with Jesus, the *Head of the church*, the Christian

“ is not only protected from the pains of hell, but is
 “ in possession of a well-grounded *claim* on the joys
 “ of heaven. Thus it is that grace ‘ reigns *through*
 “ *righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our*
 “ *Lord :*’ ” Rom. v. 21.*

I said that this quotation must suffice ; but there is yet another, which I am constrained to make, because of the clear light in which it places the distinction between the believer’s *justification* and his *sanctification*, a distinction sufficiently manifest to the attentive reader of the Scriptures, but one which previous Quaker writers have been strangely prone to confound ; a proneness, of which both the fact and the cause may be noticed before the close of this or of next letter :—“ On the whole, then, it is plain and undeniable, that the Spirit of truth and righteousness
 “ is bestowed upon mankind, through the sole mediation of Jesus Christ. And now, in bringing this
 “ point of our subject to its conclusion, I would venture to entreat the reader’s attention to the close
 “ and intimate association subsisting between two
 “ great doctrines of Christianity ; which may indeed
 “ be rightly distinguished, but can never be rightly
 “ separated—justification through the blood of Christ,
 “ and sanctification through his Spirit. In Scripture,
 “ these doctrines are very generally treated of *con-*

* Ibid. pages 425, 426.

“*jointly*. Both are represented by the sacred writers
 “as essential to the work of salvation: both as ori-
 “ginating in the boundless mercy of the Father;
 “and both as arising immediately out of *the sacrifice*
 “*of the Son of God*. Was Christ ‘set forth’ of the
 “Father, ‘to be a propitiation through faith in his
 “blood?’ Did he ‘bear our sins in his own body
 “on the tree?’ Did he thus ‘give himself for us?’
 “It was not only for the remission of sins that are
 “past, and for the justification of penitent believers,
 “but also that he might ‘*sanctify and cleanse*’ his
 “church; that he might ‘redeem us *from all ini-*
 “*quity*,’ that our conscience might be ‘purged from
 “dead works *to serve the living God*,’ that ‘we,
 “being dead to sin, should *live unto righteousness* ;’
 “Heb. ix. 14. 1 Pet. ii. 24. It is much to be de-
 “sired, that a holy caution should more and more
 “prevail among Christians, lest, by dwelling on
 “either of these doctrines, *to the exclusion of the*
 “*other*, they should lose the *balance* of divine truth;
 “for, although persons who are accustomed to com-
 “mit this dangerous practical error, may participate
 “in *some* of the joys, and experience *some* of the
 “virtue, of true religion, they cannot fail to fall very
 “short of a just apprehension and satisfying enjoy-
 “ment of the beauty, the harmony, and the com-
 “pleteness, of the gospel dispensation.”*

* Ibid. pages 443, 444.

When I read such sentiments as those which this and preceding extracts contain; and when I find the same writer, after an admirable summary of the scriptural evidence in support of our Lord's divinity, concluding in these explicit and solemn terms—"For my own part, I may venture to acknowledge a firm conviction (grounded on long-continued study and reflexion) that I must either give up the inspiration of Scripture, and with it, perhaps, the truth of Christianity itself, or allow the absolute and eternal divinity of Jesus Christ. In choosing my alternative, I cannot for a moment hesitate; for as, on the one hand, the inspiration of Scripture and the truth of Christianity rest on a basis which the profoundest thought and widest investigation serve only to establish, so, on the other hand, the glorious doctrine of 'God manifest in the flesh,' although, *as to its mode*, deeply mysterious, will ever be considered worthy of all acceptance by those who are acquainted with the depth of their own natural degradation, and know their need of an *omnipotent Redeemer*"*—I cannot but feel my heart drawn to him in Christian love. He who, in so devout and earnest a frame of mind, holds and defends the doctrines of the divinity and atonement of Jesus, and the equal necessity of justification through his

* Ibid. pages 369, 370.

blood and righteousness and sanctification by the gracious influence of his Spirit,—is one to whom, though I may regard him as, in various points, mistaken, both as to his Master's mind and his Master's will,—I must be allowed, in spite of all mistakes, to offer the right hand of fellowship, as a partaker of “like precious faith” with myself.

From the whole tenor of Mr Gurney's writings, I am satisfied, that the doctrine of free justification,—of justification on the ground of the Redeemer's righteousness alone, without works of law,—is a doctrine which he holds with a firm faith, and which is dear to him as the sole ground of hope towards God, for himself and for a perishing world. He will, therefore, be jealous of every encroachment upon it;—and if he himself, in defending any peculiar article of his theological system, has been led, inadvertently, to adopt an explanation of any portion of Scripture, which even seems to be at variance with it, and which the passage itself neither requires nor admits, he will be glad to receive the correction of his error. This, I cannot but think, has been the case, in regard to the passage in the second chapter of the epistle to the Romans, adverted to in my last letter; and of which I promised to notice in this the bearing of Mr Gurney's interpretation on the great doctrine of the sinner's acceptance with God.—The passage referred to is in verses 13—15, “For not the hearers of the

law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves : who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.”—I enter at present into no critical discussions as to the proper rendering of any of the terms or phrases in the passage ; because, as such discussions would not materially affect the precise point at issue, they would only distract the reader’s mind. “ Upon this clear and striking passage,” says Mr Gurney, “ it may be observed, first, that the “ law here mentioned is not the ceremonial law, as “ the whole tenor of the apostle’s argument plainly “ shows ; but the moral law of God, which was re- “ vealed to the Jews, and was, with still greater com- “ pleteness, unfolded under the Christian dispensa- “ tion : secondly, that the Gentiles, here brought into “ a comparison with the Jews, were not these con- “ verts to Christianity, (for of these it could not, “ with any truth, be asserted that they *had not the* “ *law*;) but they were persons who had received no “ outward revelation of the moral law of God : “ thirdly, that the work of the law was nevertheless “ written in their hearts, and that many of them (ac- “ cording to the apostle’s obvious supposition) were

“thereby actually enabled to become doers of the law : and lastly, that these persons were justified, “or accepted of the Father.”*—With the first and second of these observations I perfectly agree ; but in the third and fourth I think Mr Gurney has gone beyond the apostle, drawing from his words what they were not intended to teach. In the third, for example, he assumes it to be “the apostle’s obvious supposition” that “many” of the Gentiles were “*doers of the law*” in the sense of the designation in verse 13, where it is said “the doers of the law shall be justified ;”—and in the fourth, that these “doers of the law” actually “*were justified.*”—I have formerly endeavoured to show the amount of meaning in the phrases “doing the things contained in the law,” —“showing the works of the law written in their hearts,”—and being “a law unto themselves.” I must refer for this to my last letter.—In what the apostle says of the Gentiles, in verses 14, 15, his object is to show, that, although they had not the written law, the law of revelation, they *had a law* ; —that this was manifest in their “doing the things contained in the law ;” in the testimony of their consciences ; and in the reasonings by which they condemned or vindicated particular actions and courses of conduct. But when, in the thirteenth verse, he

* Observations on the distinguishing views and practices of the Society of Friends. Chap. i. pages 29, 30. Seventh edition.

says, "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but *the doers of the law shall be justified*," he seems to me, most evidently, to use language precisely equivalent to what the law itself says—"The man who doeth these things shall live by them." These are the terms in which, as he states elsewhere, "*Moses describeth the righteousness which is by the law.*" He lays down the universally admitted *principle of law*,—that justification is by the doing of it. And he shows that this principle has application to Gentiles and Jews alike, both being under law. If, therefore, he represents those heathens of whom he speaks, as actually justified, he represents them as justified *by the doing of the law*.—His object is, to expose the folly of the Jews in trusting for their acceptance with God to the mere possession of the law—to the *hearing* without the *doing*. This he does, first, by thus stating the principle, common to the divine law and all other laws,—essential even to the abstract idea of law,—that the doing of its requirements is the sole ground on which a law can justify, or acquit, the subjects of it. And afterwards, towards the end of the chapter, he resumes the same point, and argues it *hypothetically*,—that is, on the supposition of certain cases existing. After a most pointed and awakening appeal to his countrymen, who, while they trusted and gloried in the law, through breaking of the law dishonoured God, he

reasons thus: "For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?" Verses 25—27. The meaning of the apostle in the first of these verses—verse 25—appears to be this:—You glory in being a Jew,—a descendant of Abraham; and, without doubt, your belonging to that people is of eminent advantage to you, especially as affording you the knowledge of God's will. But you seem to forget the nature of that law in which you so confidently trust,—the extent of its requirements,—the terms on which it promises life. Remember, that it is not to circumcision,—not to mere natural descent from Abraham,—not even to the knowledge of God's will thence resulting,—that life is promised:—it is to *the doing of the law*—"The man that *doeth* these things shall live by them."—If, then, you *keep*—if you *fulfil* the law, your expectations of life from it will not be disappointed. In that case, your circumcision will profit you; your Jewish extraction, and consequent knowledge of the law, will be of real and essential benefit. But if, on the contrary, you be a transgressor of the law, you must be aware that

to transgressors it gives no hope,—no promise of life. To transgressors it is all threatening, condemnation, and curse. As a transgressor, therefore, your circumcision can profit you nothing: it is “*made uncircumcision* ;” that is, you are not a whit the better for your privileges, more than the Gentiles, the uncircumcised Gentiles, who have never possessed them, and over whom you inconsiderately glory. Your being a Jew,—your boasted connexion with Abraham, and the sign of the covenant in your flesh, are of no service to you.”—Then, in the two following verses—26 and 27—he urges this point upon their attention, in order the more effectually to convince them of the untenableness of their ground,—by *supposing* the case of an uncircumcised Gentile actually fulfilling the law. The argument in these verses may, I should think, be thus amplified:—“ You trust in the letter of the law, and in circumcision. But, since it is not to the possession of these (as has just been observed,) that life is promised, but to the practical fulfilment of the law in all its precepts; let me suppose a heathen, who has neither the letter of the law nor circumcision on which to place any reliance,—let me suppose such a heathen to ‘keep the righteousness of the law,’—that is, although not possessing it in a written form, yet living fully up to its holy requirements: do you really imagine that such a one would perish, merely because he is not a Jew? What

is the difference between you, as a transgressor of the law, and a wicked Gentile? Does not it consist simply in your having ‘the letter and circumcision,’ of which he is destitute? If, then, you were to be accepted, notwithstanding that your character is as profligate as his, solely on account of your being in possession of these, would it not necessarily follow, that a Gentile, even although he should ‘keep the righteousness of the law,’ must perish because he is without them?—that is, must perish for a thing which he cannot help,—and perish, in direct contravention of the very principle of the law, and the express letter of the divine assurance—‘The man that doeth these things shall live by them?’ Is it not, on the contrary, equally obvious and equitable, that, were such a heathen to be found, so far from being rejected on account of his uncircumcision, he should ‘*judge thee*’—possessing over thee the very superiority to which thou pretendest over him,—pronouncing the heavy aggravation of thy guilt, who, in flagrant violation of the letter of the law, and of the privileges connected with thy circumcision, ‘dost transgress the law?’—living in the wilful and remorseless breach of its pure and righteous precepts, misled by a strange insensate confidence in the mere possession of the book which contains them!”

In support of the *hypothetical* character of the apostle’s reasoning here, it may be observed, in the

first place, that he has not yet entered on his formal statement of the only ground of a sinner's acceptance with God,—whether Jew or Gentile; but has here in view, as his leading, or rather his exclusive object, to convince the Jews, his unbelieving countrymen, of the fallacious presumption of *their* hope; and as, in many cases, it is quite legitimate and conclusive to argue on supposition, so nothing can be more to his purpose, more fitted to expose the vanity of Jewish confidence, than the supposition actually made.—And, secondly, the terms employed contribute further to show, that the case from which he argues is a hypothetical one. It is that of a Gentile, who is in a state of nature, “*fulfilling*” the law,—that is, rendering a *complete obedience* to its requirements:—for, although I would by no means affirm that the original word is always used in this strict and literal acceptation, yet it is, without question, its most proper and legitimate sense; and, when so understood, it cannot, it is evident, be considered as descriptive of any *real* character, whether Gentile or Jew.

I am well aware, that Mr Gurney is as far as possible from holding the sentiment, that the Gentiles spoken of are justified by their “doing the things contained in the law,” as if such doing were the *meritorious cause* of their acceptance. He disowns every such imputation:—“As the Gentiles,” says he, “to whom the apostle was here alluding, were, ac-

“ cording to their measure of light, sanctified through
 “ the Spirit, and when sanctified, accepted, so, I
 “ think, every Christian must allow, that they were
 “ accepted, not because of their own righteousness,
 “ but through the merits and mediation of the Son of
 “ God.”—If, therefore, all that he means be this,—
 that God conveys his lessons to mankind in two vo-
 lumes, the volume of nature, and the volume of reve-
 lation; that the Holy Spirit *may* operate on the minds
 and hearts of men by the lessons of the former as
 well as by those of the latter; and that if a man,
 who is destitute of the volume of revelation, learns
 aright what is taught in *the volume he has*, and is
 rightly and habitually, though it may be far from per-
 fectly, *influenced by what he learns*, such a man may
 be found among the saved,—owing his salvation to
 the merits of the Redeemer’s mediation as its ground,
 and to the Spirit’s agency as its efficient cause; any
 one who has read the note appended to the preceding
 letter will perceive, that on this point the difference
 between us, in the theoretical principle of the case,
 is not very wide. But to me, I repeat, it is evident,
 that, when the apostle says “ the doers of the law
 shall be justified,” he lays down, as he does in other
 places, the general principle of the law, in terms of
 the same import as those of the law itself; and that
 to represent him as affirming, in such a connexion,
 the justification of those Gentiles, (many according

to Mr Gurney in number,) who “did the things contained in the law,” is exceedingly unlike his wonted jealousy of the doctrine of justification by grace “without the deeds of the law.”—And moreover, such an interpretation, while it requires straining to bring it into harmony with this fundamental doctrine, does not seem to be consistent with the grand scope of the whole passage. From the middle of the first to the middle of the third chapter of the epistle, the leading object of the apostle is, to prove the *universal need* of the salvation revealed in the gospel; the need of it among Jews and Gentiles alike. He first brings in the Gentiles guilty, then the Jews; the Gentiles, as transgressors of the law of tradition and of conscience,—the Jews as transgressors of the written law, given them by divine revelation. It is thus he comes to his conclusion, chap. iii. 19. “Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that *every* mouth” (the mouth of the Jew as well as that of the Gentile) “might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.” Having arrived at this conclusion,—the universal guilt of mankind,—he proceeds to found upon it the necessity of the grand gospel doctrine of justification by grace, through faith in the mediatorial righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give a clear and explicit statement of this doctrine, as well as of the comprehen-

siveness of God's gracious purpose in the gospel scheme, as including Gentiles and Jews alike. Verses 20—29.—Now, that in an argument of which the leading object is to establish the universal sinfulness and guilt of men, with the ulterior view of basing upon that conclusion the doctrine of justification by grace,—that in the course of such an argument he should introduce a representation of many among the Gentiles being brought, without the gospel, to a state of justification and sanctification, brought to sustain the character of “doers of the law” and persons accepted with God;—that he should bring before us Gentiles *actually justified*, before he has even closed that proof of universal guilt on which the doctrine of justification is founded;—does not appear to my mind at all natural, or consistent with that lucid order and continuity of reasoning, by which the argumentative parts of this apostle's writings are distinguished.—The whole of the second chapter, and the beginning of the third, appear to be by far most naturally interpreted, as a *setting forth of principles*, for the conviction of the Jews;—to shake their false confidences in external privilege;—to show them the common ground on which they stood with the Gentiles, as *fellow-sinners*, only with the balance of comparative guilt against themselves, in proportion to their superior light and various advantages;—to prepare them

for the question and its answer in ch. iii. 9. "What then? are we better than they?" (we Jews than they Gentiles?) "No, in no wise: for we have before proved both, Jews and Gentiles, that they are *all under sin*."

But I must pass from this to an inquiry of a different and more general kind. I have given, in copious extracts, the views of Joseph John Gurney on the doctrine of justification. They are clear, simple, scriptural. But—are they QUAKERISM? Let none be startled by the question. It is not a hasty inconsiderate one. I shall show you that there is room for it. There are large portions of the writings of this highly intelligent and devout Friend, in which we entirely lose sight of the peculiarities of Quaker sentiment and Quaker phraseology. He seems to lay aside his garb, or rather to divest the system of the costume in which before it had invariably appeared. But for the occurrence, here and there, of a word or phrase, which, to those familiar with the language of the body, conveys more than others might at all think of, we go through entire sections with unmingled pleasure, losing the *Friend* in the *Christian*,—almost forgetting even the *inward light*. I presume I speak according to truth, when I represent them as the first Quaker writings, at least of any eminence, possessing this character. He stands *per se*; and (if I am not greatly mistaken) with no in-

considerable proportion of the more rigid Friends, who belong to the old school, and hold by the ancient fathers of Quakerism, he has, on this very account, been *losing caste*. I trust Mr Gurney, as an inquirer after TRUTH, and an advocate of what he believes to be from God, has learned to estimate every thing of this kind at its proper value; and that, "counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ," he will allow no consideration whatever to tempt him one step aside from the straightforward path which the pursuit of truth prescribes. And allow me again, with every feeling of respect, to remind you all, that the question must not be, What is Quakerism? but what is *Scripturism*?—not what is Foxism, or Pennism, or Barclayism, or Gurneyism?—but what is Paulism?—Now, on the great doctrine of *justification*, am I not right in my apprehension, that there has existed amongst Friends a very considerable measure of diversity of sentiment, and no small portion of undefined vagueness of conception? I fear there has; and I think it is imputable to the incessant intrusion into this ground of the all-pervading article of your system—the *inward light*. This has infused into all the Quaker statements of this doctrine, previous to those of Joseph John Gurney, a characteristic mysticism. It has, on this and some other subjects, been a darkening light. At times, we have something approaching to clearness

on the doctrine of the sinner's acceptance with God; —but, ere we are aware, the “inward light” throws its shadow over it, and wraps it in obscurity. It is the use made of the inward light in the sinner's justification that has led to the otherwise unaccountable confounding of it with sanctification; to the reversing of the scripture order, by giving the latter the precedence of the former, by representing works as in some way available to it, or by putting something or other (it is often difficult to say what) under the name of inward light, in place of the simple belief of the testimony of God in the Gospel, as necessary to its attainment.

Those of you who are acquainted with your own authors will, I am persuaded, assent to the general correctness of this representation. In the statements of Mr Gurney, the ground of the sinner's acceptance with God is cleared of all such mysticism and confusion. I have ventured to ask, whether these statements are Quakerism. That many Friends agree with them, I rejoice to know. But if they are Quakerism, I apprehend they must be distinguished by the designation of *modern Quakerism*; and with me, I need not assure you, the designation would be no disparagement. But, that I may not appear to speak *without book*,—or to make general assertions without specific proof, let me now, for a little, set the views of *Joseph John Gurney* in comparison with those of

Robert Barclay, and see how far they agree, and how far they differ. The anonymous author of “*Strictures*” on Mr Newton’s “*Remonstrance to the Society of Friends*,” complains bitterly of that gentleman’s *partial quotations* from Barclay. It is frequently not easy to determine the extent of quotation necessary to do an author justice, in presenting a fair and full idea of his sentiments. It does not appear to me, that the author of the “*Strictures*” has made matters much better in behalf of Barclay, by the filling up of what Mr Newton had omitted. But I shall endeavour to avoid exposing myself to any similar charge, in the citation of such passages from the APOLOGY as contain the views of its author on the essential article of gospel truth now under our notice,—the article of JUSTIFICATION. To this article his seventh proposition is devoted; the illustration occupying forty-five octavo pages. I shall not be expected, I presume, to quote *the whole*!

I give, first of all, the proposition itself entire:—
 “As many as resist not this light, but receive the
 “same, it becomes in them a holy, pure, and spiritual
 “birth, bringing forth holiness, righteousness, purity,
 “and all those other blessed fruits which are accept-
 “able to God: by which holy birth, to wit, Jesus
 “Christ formed within us, and working his works in
 “us, as we are sanctified, so are we justified in the
 “sight of God, according to the apostle’s words,—

“ ‘But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye
 “are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and
 “by the Spirit of our God,’ 1 Cor. vi. 11. There-
 “fore, it is not by our works wrought in our will,
 “nor yet by good works, considered as of themselves,
 “but by Christ who is both the gift and the giver,
 “and the cause producing the effects in us; who, as
 “he hath reconciled us when we were enemies, doth
 “also in his wisdom save us and justify us after this
 “manner, as saith the same apostle elsewhere, ‘Ac-
 “cording to his mercy he saved us, by the washing
 “of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy
 “Ghost,’ Tit. iii. 5.” *

After speaking of the “papists, as placing their
 “justification, not so much in any work of holiness
 “really brought forth in them, and real forsaking of
 “iniquity, as in the mere performance of some cere-
 “monies, and a blind belief which their teachers have
 “begotten in them, that the church and the Pope,
 “having the absolute dispensation of the merits of
 “Christ, have power to make those merits effectual
 “for the remission of sins, and justification of such
 “as will perform those ceremonies—” &c. he adds:
 —“This doctrine Luther and the protestants then
 “had good reason to deny and oppose; though many
 “of them ran into another extreme, so as to deny

* Apology, page 196.

“good works to be necessary to justification, and to
 “preach up, not only remission of sins, but justifica-
 “tion by faith alone, without all works, however
 “good. So that men do not obtain their justifica-
 “tion according as they are inwardly sanctified and
 “renewed, but are justified merely by believing that
 “Christ died for them; and so some may be per-
 “fectly justified, though they be lying in gross
 “wickedness; as appears by the example of David,
 “who, they say, was fully and perfectly justified,
 “while he was lying in the gross sins of adultery and
 “murder,” &c.*

“Forasmuch as all men who have come to man’s
 “estate (the man Jesus only excepted) have sinned,
 “therefore all have need of this Saviour, to remove
 “the wrath of God from them due to their offences:
 “in this respect, he is truly said to have ‘borne the
 “iniquities of us all in his own body on the tree,’
 “and therefore is the only Mediator, having quali-
 “fied the wrath of God toward us; so that our for-
 “mer sins stand not in our way, being, by virtue of
 “his most satisfactory sacrifice, removed and par-
 “doned. Neither do we think that remission of sins
 “is to be expected, sought, or obtained, any other
 “way, or by any works or sacrifice whatsoever;
 “though, as has been said formerly, they may come

* Ibid. page 200.

“ to partake of this remission that are ignorant of the
 “ history. So then, Christ, by his death and suffer-
 “ ings, hath reconciled us to God, even while we are
 “ enemies ; that is, he offers reconciliation unto us ;
 “ we are put into a capacity of being reconciled ;
 “ God is willing to forgive us our iniquities, and to
 “ accept us, as is well expressed by the apostle, 2
 “ Cor. v. 19. ‘ God was in Christ, reconciling the
 “ world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses
 “ unto them, and hath put in us the word of recon-
 “ ciliation.’ And therefore the apostle, in the next
 “ verses, entreats them, in Christ’s stead, to be re-
 “ conciled unto God ; intimating that, the wrath of
 “ God being removed by the obedience of Christ
 “ Jesus, he is willing to be reconciled unto them,
 “ and ready to remit the sins that are past, if they
 “ repent.”*

“ We understand not, by this justification by
 “ Christ, barely the good works even wrought by
 “ the Spirit of Christ ; for they, as protestants truly
 “ affirm, are rather an effect of justification than the
 “ cause of it : but we understand the formation of
 “ Christ in us, born and brought forth in us, from
 “ which good works as naturally proceed as fruit from
 “ a fruitful tree. It is this inward birth in us, bring-
 “ ing forth righteousness and holiness in us, that doth

* Ibid. page 203.

“justify us; which having removed and done away
 “the contrary nature and spirit, that did bear rule
 “and bring condemnation, now is in dominion over
 “all in our hearts. Those, therefore, that come to
 “know Christ thus formed in them, do enjoy him
 “wholly and undivided, who is THE LORD OUR
 “RIGHTEOUSNESS. Jer. xxiii. 6.”*

“Though we place remission of sins in the right-
 “eousness and obedience of Christ performed by him
 “in the flesh, as to what pertains to the remote pro-
 “curing cause, and that we hold ourselves formally
 “justified by Christ Jesus formed and brought forth
 “in us; yet can we not, as some protestants have
 “unwarily done, exclude works from justification.
 “For though properly we be not justified *for* them,
 “yet are we justified *in* them; and they are neces-
 “sary as *causa sine qua non*, that is, the cause with-
 “out which none are justified.”†

“It is by this inward birth of Christ in man that
 “man is made just, and therefore so accounted by
 “God:—wherefore, to be plain, we are thereby, and
 “not till that be brought forth in us, formally, if we
 “must use that word, justified in the sight of God;
 “because justification is both more properly and
 “more frequently, in Scripture, taken in its proper
 “signification, for making one just, and not reputing

* Ibid. page 205.

† Ibid. page 206.

“one merely as such, and is all one with sanctification.”*

“Since good works as naturally follow from this birth, as heat from fire, therefore are they of absolute necessity to justification, as *causa sine qua non*; i. e. though not as the cause *for* which, yet as the cause *in* which we are, and without which we cannot be, justified. And, though they be not meritorious, and draw no debt upon God, yet he cannot but accept and reward them: for it is contrary to his nature to deny his own, since they may be perfect in their kind, as proceeding from a pure holy birth and root. Wherefore, their judgment is false and against the truth, who say that the holiest works of the saints are defiled and sinful in the sight of God: for these good works are not the works of the law, excluded by the apostle from justification.”†

“That we deserved those things, and much more, for our sins, which he endured in obedience to the Father, and according to his counsel, is true; but that ever God reputed him a *sinner*, is denied: neither did he ever die that we should be reputed righteous, though no more really such than He was a sinner, as hereafter appears. For indeed, if this argument hold, it might be stretched to that length

* Ibid. page 208.

† Ibid. page 208.

“ as to be very pleasing to wicked men that love to
 “ abide in their sins : for if we be made righteous,
 “ as Christ was made a sinner, merely by imputation,
 “ then, as there was no sin, no not in the least, in
 “ Christ, so it would follow, that there needed no
 “ more righteousness, no more holiness, no more in-
 “ ward sanctification in us, than there was sin in him.
 “ So then, by his ‘ *being made sin for us* ’ must be
 “ understood his suffering for our sins, that we might
 “ be made partakers of the grace purchased by him ;
 “ by the workings whereof we are ‘ made the right-
 “ eousness of God in him.’ For that the apostle
 “ understood here a being made really righteous, and
 “ not merely a being reputed such, appears by what
 “ follows, seeing in verses 14, 15, 16. of the following
 “ chapter, he argues largely against any supposed
 “ agreement of light and darkness, righteousness and
 “ unrighteousness, which must needs be admitted, if
 “ men are to be reckoned ingrafted into Christ, and
 “ real members of him, merely by an imputative
 “ righteousness, wholly without them, while they
 “ themselves are actually unrighteous. And indeed
 “ it may be thought strange, how some men have
 “ made this so fundamental an article of their faith,
 “ which is so contrary to the whole strain of the Gos-
 “ pel ; a thing which Christ, in none of all his ser-
 “ mons and gracious speeches, ever willed any to rely
 “ upon ; always recommending to us works, as instru-

“ mental to our justification. And the more it is to
 “ be admired, because that sentence or term (so fre-
 “ quently in their mouths, and so often pressed by
 “ them as the very *basis* of their hope and confidence)
 “ to wit, *the imputed righteousness of Christ*, is not
 “ to be found in all the Bible, at least as to my ob-
 “ servation.” *

“ That it is by this revelation of Jesus Christ, and
 “ the new creation in us, that we are justified, doth
 “ evidently appear from that excellent saying of the
 “ apostle included in the proposition itself, Tit. iii. 5.
 “ ‘ According to his mercy he hath saved us, by the
 “ washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy
 “ Ghost, &c.’ Now, that whereby we are saved,
 “ that we are no doubt justified by; which words
 “ are in this respect synonymous. Here the apostle
 “ ascribes the immediate cause of justification to this
 “ inward work of regeneration, which is Jesus Christ
 “ revealed in the soul, as being that which formally
 “ states us in a capacity of being reconciled to God;
 “ the washing or regeneration being that inward
 “ power and virtue, whereby the soul is cleansed, and
 “ clothed with the righteousness of Christ, so as to
 “ be made fit to appear before God.” †

“ If no man can be justified without faith, and no
 “ faith be living, nor yet available to justification

* Ibid. pages 214, 215.

† Ibid. page 225.

“ without works, then works are necessary to justification.” *

“ There is a great difference betwixt the works of the law, and those of grace, or of the gospel. The first are excluded ; the second not, but are necessary. The first are those which are performed in man’s own will, and by his strength, in a conformity to the outward law and letter ; and therefore are man’s own imperfect works, or works of the law, which ‘ makes nothing perfect ;’ and to this belong all the ceremonies, purifications, washings, and traditions of the Jews. The second are the works of the Spirit of grace in the heart, wrought in conformity to the inward and spiritual law ; which works are not wrought in man’s will, nor by his power and ability, but in and by the power and Spirit of Christ in us, and therefore are pure and perfect in their kind, and may be called Christ’s works, for that he is the immediate author and worker of them. Such works we affirm absolutely necessary to justification, so that a man cannot be justified without them ; and all faith without them is dead and useless, as the apostle James saith.” †

I have made these extracts copiously, and, if I do not greatly deceive myself, impartially,—that is, so as to exhibit fairly, and as clearly as their own in-

* Ibid. page 229.

† Ibid. page 231.

herent and palpable inconsistencies will admit, the views of the author. The subject is a vital one; resembling, in the Christian system, those parts in the corporeal frame, in which a wound, or any material disorganization, is invariably fatal. And the first thing I have to request of you is, that you would compare the doctrine taught in these extracts with that contained in the extracts from J. J. Gurney; and, having done so, to ask yourselves the question, whether both can possibly have been the dictate of the same Spirit. It is impossible you can read the two, however hastily, without being struck with the difference, not in mere phraseology, but in the essence of the sentiment. Now, if there be any class of men amongst you, whom we should expect, more than others, to be under the guidance of that *immediate inspiration* for which you contend as the privilege of New Testament believers, it is surely your eminent and generally accredited writers. But then, the Holy Spirit cannot contradict himself; and if Robert Barclay and Joseph John Gurney contradict each other,—both may be wrong, but it is clear that both cannot be right; and that by the one, or by the other, the Spirit of the Lord has not spoken. The question, it is true, is of comparatively little consequence, whether they do or do not agree with each other; the grand point to be ascertained being, which of them, or whether either of them, agrees

with the apostles of Christ. I conceive the statement of the doctrine of justification given by Mr Gurney to be substantially that of Scripture,—clear, simple, satisfactory. That given by Barclay appears to me distinguished by a most extraordinary confusion of ideas, and, as far as its principles can be at all distinctly ascertained, subversive, materially if not utterly, of the apostolic gospel. This is a heavy charge; but I do not make it lightly.—I shall leave you, however, in the meanwhile, to compare the views of Barclay, for yourselves, with the unerring oracles of divine truth; that you may bring your minds to the perusal of my next letter with a seriousness proportioned to the deeply interesting nature of the subject.—I cannot but feel confident, that, if you examine these oracles aright, I shall be able to carry you along with me in my vindication of the heavy judgment which I have ventured to pronounce on Barclay's representations of it.

Yours respectfully,

R. W.

LETTER VI.

ON BARCLAY'S VIEWS OF JUSTIFICATION.

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

HAVING laid before you in my last letter, copious citations from the "APOLOGY," on the all-important subject of the Bible doctrine of justification, I concluded it with a charge, which I admitted to be a heavy one, but which I could not then consent to modify;—namely, that, while the statement given by Barclay is "distinguished by a "most extraordinary confusion of ideas," it appears to me also, "so far as its principles can be distinctly "ascertained, to be subversive, materially if not utterly, of the apostolic gospel."—This heavy charge I cannot now, any more than formerly, consent to modify.—Leaving, then, for subsequent notice the *source* of the confusion and the error, which it is not difficult to detect in the leading principles of ancient Quakerism, observe, in the meanwhile:—

1. In Barclay's statement, explicitly and by pervading implication, *justification* and *sanctification* are

strangely identified. The distinction between the two is, in the Scriptures, as clearly defined, as if it had been traced with a pencil of light; and it is well maintained in the statements of Mr Gurney. The distinction, indeed, is so plain, that one should have thought the weakest mind could not miss perceiving it; which renders the perverting influence of an erroneous principle, in the case of a mind such as Barclay's, the more remarkable. Justification relates to *state*; sanctification to *character*. In justification, the sinner is pardoned and accepted; that is, he is absolved from guilt and condemnation, and, though a sinner, is graciously treated as righteous; on what ground, we shall see immediately:—in sanctification, those principles of personal holiness are infused into his heart, which extend their purifying influence to his life. The difference between the two may be simply illustrated by the case of a prisoner at a human tribunal. He may be proved guilty, but pardoned:—the pardon of his crimes may be officially and solemnly announced to him; and he may be dismissed from the bar, free of charge in the eye of law. But though his *state* is thus changed, his *character* may remain the same: he may carry with him from the bar, an unaltered and unmitigated disposition to evil,—a heart as wicked as ever. He is pardoned, and, in the eye of law, reputed and treated as innocent; but he is unpurified from his

pollution. I am aware that what may, and frequently does, take place, under human governments, has no parallel in the government of God; that under his administration, there is no pardon without purity, no change of state without a change of character, no justification without sanctification; that the two are invariably found together; no sinner, since the fall, having ever been justified without being sanctified, or sanctified without being justified. But this does not warrant their being confounded; any more than we should be warranted to call justice mercy, and mercy justice, as they subsist in the divine nature, because the two are never found there in separation from each other. Nor can they be confounded, without the most pernicious results to the simplicity and consistency of gospel truth. That Barclay does confound them, no attentive reader of the preceding extracts can hesitate for a moment to admit. He takes justification, according to its literal etymological import (*justum facere*), to signify *making righteous*; and represents sinners as “made the righteousness of God in Christ,” not when they are pardoned and accepted *on account of* his perfect righteousness, but when the principles of personal righteousness are produced in them “by the workings of his grace:”—and indeed, what can be more explicit than the assertion, (an assertion which cannot but surprise Mr Gurney and many more amongst you,

as much as it does myself)—that “justification is
 “both more properly and more frequently, in Scrip-
 “ture, taken in its proper signification, for *making*
 “*one just*, and not reputeing one merely as such, and
 “*is all one with sanctification !*”

2. This leads me to notice, the denial by Barclay of the doctrine of justification by *imputed righteousness*.—Nothing can be more weak, than discarding a doctrine, merely because the special phrase by which theologians may, for brevity’s sake, have chosen to express it, does not occur in the Scriptures. Even were the phrase ever so objectionable, the doctrine may “stand sure,” when human terms are rejected. You will perceive that Mr Gurney adopts the phraseology which Barclay disowns; and shows, in the clearest manner, that the truth expressed by it is one of the essential elementary principles of the Gospel. I have no objection to take my stand, for this doctrine, on one text alone; although I conceive the *principle* to pervade the New Testament. The text to which I refer is 2 Cor. v. 21. “For he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—There is in the words a double antithesis:—Jesus “knew no sin,” but he was “made sin:”—and he was “made sin,” that we might be “made righteousness.” On account of this second antithesis, which was evidently and pointedly intended by the apostle,

I prefer our own translation to that of those who would render the words "he hath made him *a sin-offering*;" besides that it is not desirable, when it can be avoided, to understand the same word in different senses in the same clause of a short sentence. There is no more impropriety in speaking of Christ's being "made sin," than in speaking of our being "made righteousness;" and, the antithesis being evident and pointed, it follows, that we are "made righteousness" in a sense corresponding to that in which Christ was "made sin." How, then, was Christ "made sin?" I grant Mr Barclay, as readily and as strongly as he could have wished, the absurdity of the supposition that Christ was made *a sinner*,—as if there could be any thing in the case of the nature of *actual transference* of our sinfulness to his *personal character*;—a conception nowhere to be found but in the ravings of antinomian insanity. How, then, setting aside this folly, does Mr Barclay himself interpret the phrase? By his "being made sin for us," says he, "must be understood *his suffering for our sins*." Well: this surely implies that our sins were *imputed to him*, or laid to his charge; for how otherwise could he bear the suffering due to them? I know of no possible way in which he could be "made sin,"—or, in other words, in which our sins could become his,—but *by imputation*. And if so; then, to make the antithesis fair, we must be "made

righteousness,"—or in other words, his righteousness must become ours,—*by imputation*. Mr Barclay loses the antithesis altogether, when, after having interpreted Christ's being "made sin for us" of his "suffering for our sins," he explains our being "made the righteousness of God in him," of our "being made partakers of the grace purchased by him, by the workings whereof we are made the righteousness of God in him;" thus resolving our being "made righteousness" into our being sanctified, or made *personally* righteous. The true force of the antithesis evidently is, that, in being "made sin for us," Christ endured the penalty due to our sins *as if they had been his*; and that, in being "made the righteousness of God in him," we receive the reward due to his righteousness, *as if it had been ours*. There is, on neither side, actual transference; on both, there is imputation. I cannot put the all-important truth in more appropriate terms than those in which it is clothed by Mr Gurney, at page 179. I refer you to that admirable statement, begging you earnestly to compare it with Barclay's, and both with Paul's; and to judge for yourselves, which of the two is in concord, and which at variance, with the dictates of the Spirit of Christ. Both right, I repeat, they cannot be; the one affirming the imputation of Christ's righteousness to be the very ground of the believing sinner's acceptance with God,—the

other denying the imputation of Christ's righteousness altogether, as either the language or the sentiment of Scripture; the one resting on it as his only confidence, the other expressing his astonishment at all who place their hopes on such a basis,—and representing it as “contrary to the whole strain of the Gospel,—a thing which Christ in none of all his sermons and gracious speeches ever willed any to rely upon, always recommending to us works as instrumental to our justification.”—Which of these is Quakerism? “Whether of them twain” was “taught of God?” “Which way went the Spirit of Christ from” Paul, to dictate such things to Barclay? —But

3. Mark what Barclay says of works:—Jesus Christ according to him “always recommended *works as instrumental to justification.*” If he did, then so of course did his apostles after him; for it was his promised Spirit that “led them into all truth.” We are to understand Mr Barclay, therefore, as affirming it to be the doctrine of Christ and his apostles,—the doctrine taught by the Spirit of truth in the Scriptures, that good works are “necessary to justification”—“instrumental to justification”—“necessary as a *causa sine qua non*, that is, the cause without which none are justified.”—Language more at variance than this with the representations of Scripture, it is not easy to conceive. And when I say

so, I have fully in remembrance the distinction made by Barclay between the works of the law and the works of the Gospel; the former of which he excludes from having any influence in justification, while he affirms the necessity of the latter. The inconsistency of this representation *with itself* will be noticed immediately:—my present object is, to point out its contrariety to the spirit and letter of the Gospel. The divine testimony is, that “all have sinned;”—that, all having sinned, all are condemned by the sentence of that law of which sin is the transgression, and of which the terms are so unequivocally explicit—“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them;” so that, unless the man can be found who has “continued in all things written in the book of the law, and done them”—done them in principle and in practice, in all their extent and spirituality of requirement,—the man cannot be found who is not under this curse;—that from this state of condemnation and curse, there is no deliverance possible by any “works of righteousness” which the sinner can do,—the *righteousness of a sinner* being a contradiction in terms, and every attempt of a sinner to justify himself an attempt at an impossibility, and an insult to the God with whom he has to do;—that a sinner must be a debtor to mercy;—that the only ground on which mercy is dispensed to sinners is, the righteous-

ness, atonement, and intercession of the Son of God, the Divine Mediator between God and men;—and that in the meritorious and saving virtue of his finished work sinners obtain an interest by faith,—that is, by believing the record that God hath given of his Son,—“the word of reconciliation,—that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,”—that “grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord,”—that “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Justification by grace is the first principle of the Gospel. Deny it, and the Gospel is gone. The Gospel is “glad tidings.” But to sinners, there can be no glad tidings but tidings of grace. Grace is their essential element. Take it away, and there is nothing left that deserves the name. Now, in the philosophy of the Bible, and in the philosophy of common sense, *grace* and *works* are opposites; and no terms can be more explicit than those in which the apostle of the Gentiles teaches us, that salvation must be entirely of the one, or entirely of the other,—that there is no medium, and no possible combination or compromise:—“If it be by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace:—but if it be by works, then is it no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work.” Rom. xi. 6. Thus grace and works reciprocally neutralize

and destroy each other. Introduce grace, and works are gone: introduce works, and grace is gone.—And if justification is *by grace*, and at the same time *through faith*, then must the opposition between *faith* and works be as perfect as the opposition between *grace* and works. Without this, the scheme would be inconsistent with itself. And such accordingly is the inspired statement. Justification by *faith* and justification by works, are as perfect contraries as justification by *grace* and justification by works; faith itself forming no part of the ground of acceptance, but being only the medium of the sinner's interest in that ground; and this, on the simple principle, that, as the Gospel comes to sinners in the form of a testimony, there is no conceivable way in which the blessings revealed in a testimony can be received, but the reception of the testimony. *Grace* and *faith*, standing equally contradistinguished from *works* in the matter of justification, are in full harmony with each other;—so much so, that in the constitution of the Gospel, according to the apostle, faith is the appointed *medium* of justification, for the very reason of its securing the undivided glory to grace as the *ground* of justification. “It is OF FAITH,” says he, “THAT IT MIGHT BE BY GRACE,” Rom. iv. 16.

The doctrine of which I now speak is one of so *pervading* a character in the Holy Scriptures, that,

in adducing proofs, *selection* is the difficulty. I shall satisfy myself with two passages, the first that present themselves to memory.—“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,” Gal. ii. 15, 16. “Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, having been witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth, a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without

the works of the law," Rom. iii. 20—28.—A *law* is a divine institute. The "law of faith" is that divine institute, according to which sinners are to be justified by faith in the merits of another, and not by any works of their own. This institute has all the authority of a law. The "law of works" is that divine institute, according to which life is promised to personal obedience. On the terms of this law it was, that life was held originally ; and continued to be held, till man became a sinner. It was not then abrogated. Its requirements continued on God's part, and its obligations on man's. But it could no longer be the *ground of acceptance*. As soon as human nature became a fallen, sinful, guilty nature, the "law of works," in this view of it, as a means of justification, was set aside for ever. It could only condemn. The "law of faith" took its place. So that, as it had been the will of God, that man, in his state of innocence, should hold life on the ground of his own obedience, so was it the will of God, that man, in his state of sin and guilt, should have life restored to him on the ground of the merits of the promised Mediator, and should obtain it by faith in his name ; that he should be justified, not by works, but by grace. Ever since the fall, this has been the published will or law of heaven, in regard to sinful men. Having forfeited life by the "law of works," they can be justified only by the "law of faith,"—

which, as we have seen, is the same thing with the law of grace. This is God's authoritative appointment; and he who contravenes it, and, by seeking justification otherwise, breaks "the law of faith," is as really a transgressor against the will of God, as when, by eating the forbidden fruit, man originally broke "the law of works." To sinners, then, justification by faith is God's law; and it may, with perfect truth, be said, that GRACE is the LAW of the Gospel.

I have adverted to Mr Barclay's distinction (a distinction, however, by no means peculiar to him) between the *works of the law*, and the *works of the Gospel*; the latter being the works which, he holds, contribute to justification. Now, I know of no works that are not *works of law*. Every good work is a work of obedience; and all obedience supposes law. "Where no law is," there can be no obedience, any more than there can be "transgression." The distinction, then, cannot relate to the *works themselves*; it must relate to *the principle from which they are performed*. I can form no conception of any other difference. Works of the law must be works performed from a *legal* principle; while works of the Gospel are works performed from an *evangelical* principle. Let us see, then, on this supposition, how matters will stand. I am naturally led by it to observe,

4. Barclay's system, on this subject, is as full as it can hold of *inconsistency with itself*.—To begin at the point to which I have just adverted. Works of the law do not contribute to justification; works of the Gospel do. If works of the Gospel do contribute to justification, then it must be the design of God, in the constitution of the Gospel, that they should. And if so, the principle from which they are done ought to be in accordance with that design; they ought to be done with a view to it;—with a view, that is, to justification. But if they are done with this view, they are, in the very principle of them, converted into works of law. They involve, that is, the palpable contradiction, of *evangelical works* done from a *legal principle*. If it should be said, they may contribute to justification, although not performed with a view to it; then it will follow, that it is wrong to have our principles and motives of action in conformity with the divine arrangement of means and ends in the constitution of the Gospel!—But this is not all. According to Barclay, “protestants are right in affirming” that “good works, wrought by the Spirit of Christ, are rather *an effect of justification than the cause of it* ;”—and yet he himself affirms these works to be the “*causa sine qua non*, that is, *the cause without which none are justified* !” But a cause must precede its effect; and an effect must follow its cause. If good works are the effect

of justification, they cannot be its cause:—and if they be its cause, they cannot be its effect. Even supposing the idea of meritoriousness excluded from the cause altogether; still there can be no excluding from a cause of the idea of *precedence*; nor from an effect, of the idea of *sequence*. If good works, therefore, be the “cause without which none are justified,”—if in this sense, they be “necessary to justification,”—then they must exist before it: and if, on the contrary, they be “rather the effect than the cause,” then they must be consequent upon it, and can only exist after it.—And when, confounding justification with sanctification, or rather with regeneration, he speaks of it as consisting in “the formation of Christ in us, born and brought forth in us, *from which good works as naturally proceed* as fruit from a fruitful tree,”—it takes the precedence of the works, as the tree does of the fruits it produces. Yet in the very next sentence he adds—“It is this inward birth in us, bringing forth holiness and righteousness in us, *that doth justify us* ;” where it appears again as a sequence!—There is, in truth, in Mr Barclay’s representations of this subject, the most extraordinary and inextricable confusion. We have justification as the cause of good works, and good works as the cause of justification;—the cause the effect, and the effect the cause;—we are justified by faith, we are justified by works, we are justified by both, and we

are justified by neither ;—we are justified by being sanctified, and we are sanctified by being justified, and justification and sanctification are one and the same thing !

This is not a caricature. Every distinct member of the self-contradictory statement might be authenticated by appropriate citations. And all this comes of his mystical “inward light,” and the vain attempt to make the phraseology of Scripture, itself so distinguished for simplicity, quadrate with his necessarily vague conceptions of this impalpable and shadowy principle,—this “*vehiculum dei*,”—this “real spiritual substance, in which God and Christ are as wrapped up,”—“in which God, as Father, Son, and Spirit, dwells,”—which “subsists in the hearts of wicked men even while they are in their wickedness,”—and which yet is “the spiritual body of Christ, the flesh and blood of Christ, which came down from heaven, of which all the saints do feed, and are thereby nourished unto eternal life !” It is thus that, by a wretched perversion of the figurative terms of Scripture, “the man Christ Jesus,” the messenger of the covenant, “Immanuel, God with us,” “the light of the world,” is converted into *a principle* ; and that principle, by some mystical inward operation (which can only be understood by experience, but which, judging from the attempts actually made, experience has never enabled any man to explain)

“*mediates, and atones*” and renders “*God propitious,*” and “reinstates man in the holy image he has fallen from by sin !” So speaks William Penn ; and, with hardly less mysterious obscurity, speaks Robert Barclay, when he represents this “spiritual, heavenly, invisible principle, in which God, as “Father, Son and Spirit dwells,” as “a seed which “of its own nature draws, invites, and inclines to God,” “a measure of which is in all men ;” so that, “when “it is resisted Christ is said to be slain or crucified : “and, on the contrary, as this seed is received in the “heart, and suffered to bring forth its natural and “proper effect, Christ comes to be formed and raised, “of which the Scripture makes so much mention, “calling it the new man ; Christ within, the hope of “glory. This is that *Christ within*, which we are “heard so much to speak and declare of, every where “preaching him up, and exhorting people to believe “in the light, and *obey* it, that they may come to “know Christ in them, *to deliver them from all sin.*” And then—“As many as resist not this light, but “receive the same, it becomes in them a holy, pure, “and spiritual birth, bringing forth holiness, righteousness, purity, and all those other blessed fruits “which are acceptable to God : *by which holy birth,* “to wit, Jesus Christ formed within us, and working “his works in us, as we are sanctified, so are we “*justified in the sight of God.*”—Thus we are justi-

fied, not by believing on the Christ who died on Calvary, the atoning “Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world,”—but by receiving and cherishing a mystical principle, called the “universal light,” the “saving light,” the “*Christ within* :”—and this being the new birth, we are *justified* by being *born again*.—In contrast with all this mysticism, so unintelligible in itself, and so wide of the simplicity of the Scriptures, it is refreshing to recur to the luminous and truly evangelical representations of this all-important subject, from the pen of Joseph John Gurney :—“Man by nature is the child of wrath, ‘labouring under the curse of the law—the awful “sentence of eternal death. What, then, can be “conceived more adapted to his need, than *justification*—a plenary remission of all his sins through “the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and a free acceptance of him as righteous, for the sake of a righteous Saviour? Here he finds reconciliation with “a God of justice, deliverance from condemnation “and eternal punishment, and a well-founded hope “of immortal bliss. The utmost claims of the law “are satisfied; the holiness of the Creator is more “than ever manifested; and the broken-hearted sinner reposes in peace on the bosom of infinite mercy. In himself, indeed, as a transgressor from his “birth, he is vile and polluted; but, by the blood of “Jesus sprinkled on his heart, his conscience is

“purged from every dead work; and, having obtained an interest in the Saviour of men, he wears a robe of righteousness in which there is no spot. God accepts him in the Beloved; and adopts him, as a child of grace, and as an heir of glory.”*

5. I have but one observation more to offer on Mr Barclay's statements. It relates to the strange misrepresentation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without works,—as if it implied that men might be justified by faith, *continuing in sin*.—Thus, as a specimen of more to the same purpose: —“This doctrine Luther and the protestants then had good reason to deny and oppose; though many of them ran into another extreme, so as to deny good works to be necessary to justification, and to preach up, not only remission of sins, but justification by faith alone, without all works, however good. So that men do not obtain their justification according as they are inwardly sanctified and renewed, but are justified merely by believing that Christ died for them: and so some may be perfectly justified, though they be lying in gross wickedness; as appears by the example of David, who, they say, was fully and perfectly justified,

* “Hints on the portable evidences of Christianity, by Joseph John Gurney,” p. 138.—as quoted by Richard Ball, in his “Holy Scripture the Test of Truth.”

“while he was lying in the gross sins of murder and adultery.”

But there cannot be a grosser slander of the protestant doctrines than this. That in the wild ravings of antinomianism, representations may be found, such as afford too much countenance to the slander, is, I am aware, too true. But still it *is* slander. If evangelical protestants taught, that a sinner might be justified *without being sanctified*,—that there might be pardon *without penitence*,—acceptance in the sight of God, *without regeneration and a new heart*, there would be ground for the charge. But it is not so; and Mr Barclay knew, or ought to have known, when he wrote, that it was not so. Justification and sanctification, though blessings distinct in kind,—the one (as before explained) relating to change of *state*, the other to change of *character*,—are yet, in point of fact, inseparable in the sinner’s experience. The same faith of the gospel testimony which brings the sinner into union with Christ, and gives him an interest in his atonement and righteousness for the forgiveness of his sins and his acceptance with God, introduces, at the same time, into his heart the principle of regeneration and progressive holiness. The truth as it is in Jesus, which, under the teaching and power of the Spirit, is the means of his regeneration, being received into his heart by faith, continues to operate there according to its own holy nature.

“ Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God” (immediately afterwards interpreted of “ the Gospel”) “ which liveth and abideth for ever,”—this “ his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” 1 Pet. i. 23, 25. compared with 1 John iii. 9. The new nature, of which he then becomes the partaker, is opposed to all sin, and, in the operation of its principles, productive only of holiness. Sin, it is true, remains ; but it belongs to the old nature ; and it remains, because, in regeneration, the principles of that nature are not annihilated, but only overpowered and brought into subjection.—“ There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus :”—this is *justification* ; and it is in virtue of their being “ in Christ Jesus” that it is enjoyed ; faith so uniting them to him, that his righteousness becomes theirs, as being that of their substitute :—“ Who walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit :” this is *sanctification* ; and, according to the explicit and universal testimony of scripture, none are “ in Christ Jesus,” and of the number of those “ to whom there is no condemnation,” who do not thus “ walk after the Spirit.”—Justification is by faith ; but it is by a faith that is always subsequently productive. There is, in truth, no other. An unproductive faith is *no* faith ; any more than an unproductive charity is really charity. The faith that does not sanctify,

we may at once conclude, has not justified; for an *unsanctified believer* is just as great an anomaly and impossibility, under the gospel covenant, as a *justified unbeliever*. There are no good works without faith; and there is no faith without good works.—How strikingly does the apostle Paul teach us the double lesson, of *the exclusion of all works from the ground of our salvation*, and yet *the necessity of them in all the saved*, as the very fulfilment of God's purpose in their new creation, when he thus sets the two in immediate juxtaposition:—"For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: *not of works*, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. ii. 8—10.—The sinner, then, who presumes to give his own works any place in the ground of his acceptance and salvation,—and the sinner who imagines himself accepted and saved, without bringing forth good works,—are equally in error. The one mistakes the foundation of gospel hope; the other mistakes the nature of gospel salvation. The one, in joining his own works with the righteousness of Christ, unites what God has separated; the other, in fancying himself justified by Christ's righteousness, while he has not been sanctified by Christ's Spirit, separates what God has united. God "justifies the

ungodly"—that is, no godliness of theirs, even supposing they had it, enters into the ground of their acceptance:—but he does not justify them, *continuing in their ungodliness*. “The grace of God which bringeth salvation—teacheth them, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus ii. 11—14.

I have dwelt long upon this subject; because, in the strictest sense of the term, it may be denominated *fundamental*; and because, from the writings of Barclay and others of your older authors, there is reason to fear that your “Society” has, to no inconsiderable extent, been leavened with vague, and crude, and unscriptural conceptions of it. I rejoice that such a man as Joseph John Gurney has, by his publications, and otherwise, been exerting himself to “purge out this old leaven,” and in its room to substitute—not new, but still older,—the better leaven of the doctrine of prophets and apostles. But, while he states truth, why does he not more explicitly condemn error? Why is he so chary in finding any fault with the writers of his own body by whom the corrupt leaven was introduced, and propagated, and fixed,—

writers from whom he differs so essentially, that, if his doctrine be true and saving, theirs must be false and perilous? Is it, that he is afraid of exposing to question the doctrine of immediate inspiration, or what, in more modified terms, he denominates "the perceptible influence and guidance of the Spirit of truth?" If so, the course is not worthy of him. He is sacrificing truth to unity; and to a unity, too, that is not real, but external merely; not a unity of sound principle, but of expediency and *esprit du corps*; a mechanical admixture of various and discordant materials, rather than an intimate, homogeneous, chemical affinity. The points of difference are of such a nature and magnitude, as not to admit of neutrality, or of compromise. No middle course can be steered between them. If the views entertained by him of the doctrine of justification be in harmony with the mind of Christ, then must those of Penn and Barclay be "another gospel." The question, which of the two is genuine Quakerism, is one of comparatively little moment. But assuredly, the religious community which harbours, and tolerates, and cherishes both, is, in no trivial degree, "divided against itself;" and, in such circumstances, infinite Wisdom has forewarned of the result. The attempt to maintain it in vigour and prosperity, when the materials of it, coming to light, are found to be so essentially and extensively heterogeneous, is to "fight against God;" for

it involves unfaithfulness to truth, to Christ, to the church, and to the souls of men.—If the doctrine of justification by grace, through faith in the righteousness and atonement of Jesus, be the “*articulus stantis ecclesiæ* ;” then must the doctrine by which justification is placed on any ground of human merit, or on any thing else whatever than the divine virtue of the Redeemer’s mediatorial work, be the “*articulus cadentis ecclesiæ* ;”—an element, in as far as it exists, of decay and ruin.—In regard to those who hold such an error, I cannot for a moment admit a doubt, the apostle would have applied, in all its imperativeness, his injunction to Timothy—“ From such withdraw thyself.”

My next letter will consist principally of an examination of those passages of the Scriptures which are usually adduced in support of your “inward light.”

Yours respectfully,

R. W.

LETTER VII.

ON THE SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY PLEADED FOR THE "INWARD LIGHT."

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

THE confusion in Robert Barclay's mind, by which, so very strangely, he has been led to confound and blend together, in his statements and illustrations, doctrines so palpably distinct as those of *justification* and *sanctification*, may be traced, without difficulty, as I have formerly hinted, to the predominant influence of his views of the "inward light,"—which, in his case, as in that of many more, only

—"led to bewilder, and dazzled to blind."

—That light, we have seen, consists not in the knowledge of any thing that is externally revealed, or that comes to the mind of its possessor through any extraneous channel. It is a principle within, common to all that are born into the world; yet not inherited or bestowed by nature, but the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the fruit of Christ's mediation. Now, what I

wish you particularly to notice at present is, that according to the representations of your standard writers, this light is at once, and equally, *the law* and *the Gospel*. It is the discovery and rule of duty; and it is the means of salvation. Here lies, to no inconsiderable extent, its deceptive influence on the subject before us. It is the law, or rule of duty; and by it, therefore, must be “the knowledge of sin:”—and yet, although this is the very reason assigned by the apostle why the law cannot justify, this light is *saving* light. It imparts no knowledge of the Saviour revealed in the Gospel testimony,—no knowledge of “the truth as it is in Jesus:”—and yet,—although it is solely “the knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent” that is “life eternal,”—this light is *saving* light;—light by which all men are put into a capacity of salvation.—How, then, does it save? Seeing it reveals nothing respecting any ground of pardon or acceptance with God, beyond what exists in the sinner’s own bosom, it is no difficult matter to perceive the infallible tendency; leading precisely to the result apparent in the confused conceptions of Barclay. How can it save in any other way, than by some supposed operation in the sinner’s mind and heart? And if so, then there is evidently no room left for justification,—(in the proper forensic sense of the term, as meaning pardon, acquittal, acceptance before God,)—on the

ground of a righteousness extraneous to himself; but it comes, inevitably, to be confounded with personal righteousness, or sanctification. The “inward light” is conceived to impart the knowledge of duty, together with a certain favourable disposition towards it,—a kind of constraining divine influence to what is good,—which may, however, be resisted:—and, according to Barclay, it is by conformity to this knowledge, by following this disposition, by yielding to this influence, that sinful men are justified. Now it is by ascribing justification to this personal influence in the sinner’s own mind, that Barclay, almost of necessity, identifies it with sanctification.

Allow me to illustrate my meaning, and confirm my charge, by a quotation, which will, at the same time, serve as a specimen of his general principles of exposition on such subjects.—“This saving spiritual light is “the gospel, which the apostle says expressly is preached in every creature under heaven, even that very “Gospel of which Paul was made a minister, Col. i. “23. For the Gospel is not a mere declaration of “good things, being the power of God unto salvation to all those that believe, Rom. i. 16. Though “the outward declaration of the Gospel be taken “sometimes for the Gospel, yet it is but figuratively, “and by a metonymy. For, to speak properly, the “Gospel is this inward power and life which preacheth glad tidings in the hearts of all men, offering

“salvation unto them, and seeking to redeem them
 “from their iniquities; and therefore it is said to be
 “preached in every creature which is under heaven:
 “whereas there are many thousands of men and
 “women to whom the outward Gospel was never
 “preached. Therefore the apostle Paul, Rom. i.
 “where he says ‘the Gospel is the power of God
 “unto salvation,’ adds, that ‘therein is revealed the
 “righteousness of God from faith to faith;’ and also
 “‘the wrath of God’ against such as ‘hold the truth
 “in unrighteousness:’ for this reason, saith he, be-
 “cause that which may be known of God is mani-
 “fest in them; for God hath showed it unto them.
 “Now that which may be known of God is known
 “by the Gospel, which was manifest in them. For
 “those of whom the apostle speaks had no outward
 “gospel preached to them; so that it was by the
 “inward manifestation of the knowledge of God *in*
 “*them*, which is indeed the Gospel preached in man,
 “that the righteousness of God is revealed from
 “faith to faith; that is, it reveals to the soul that
 “which is just, good, and righteous; and that, as
 “the soul receiveth it and believes, righteousness
 “comes more and more to be revealed, from one
 “degree of faith unto another. For though, as the
 “following verse saith, the outward creation declares
 “the power of God; yet that which may be known
 “of God is manifest *within*; by which inward mani-

“ festation we are made capable to see and discern
 “ the eternal power and Godhead in the outward cre-
 “ ation ; so, were it not for this inward principle, we
 “ could no more understand the invisible things of
 “ God by the outward visible creation, than a blind
 “ man can see and discern the variety of shapes and
 “ colours, or judge of the beauty of the outward
 “ creation.” *

I do not remember if, within the compass of a single page, I have ever met with a more extraordinary tissue of blunders and inconsistencies. You must allow me to state and expose them, *seriatim* ; as this may furnish us with principles, such as will facilitate the discussion of other passages of Scripture besides those here introduced.—Observe, then—

1. “ This saving spiritual light is the Gospel”—
 “ even that very gospel of which Paul was made a
 “ minister.”—If so, it must testify of Jesus : for the Gospel of which Paul was made a minister, which he had it in commission to preach, and which he “ did preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom,” was “ the testimony of Jesus.” He “ determined not to know any thing among his hearers, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” It was a testimony of facts and principles. If, therefore, the inward light be “ the very gospel whereof Paul was

* Apology, pages 167, 168.

made a minister," then they who possess it must possess the knowledge of "Jesus Christ and him crucified,"—the knowledge of the facts and principles contained in the divine testimony concerning him. All mankind have the inward light; all mankind, therefore, must have the knowledge of Jesus Christ,—the knowledge of "the word of reconciliation, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" for the ministry of Paul, as "an ambassador of Christ," was to bear to his fellow-sinners the tidings of this "word of reconciliation." Is it, then, so? Is the whole heathen world in possession of the Gospel—"the very gospel which Paul preached?" Paul speaks to the Colossians of their having "*heard* this gospel;" and he dates its spiritual productiveness in them from "*the day they heard it*, and knew the grace of God in truth." Beyond all question, this refers to the preaching of those who had first brought them the glad tidings of salvation in the message of the Gospel. But, if Barclay be right, they had the Gospel before. It was no news to them. They had it in the "spiritual saving light"—"the very gospel of which Paul was made a minister." And so it is with all mankind. So that, since the Gospel which Paul preached is the Gospel which missionaries profess to preach, these heralds of the cross carry to the heathen only what they already have! On what

ground can Robert Barclay, or any sober-minded man, maintain this?—Let us see.

2. “The Gospel is not a mere declaration of good things, being ‘the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’”—Here are two statements, of which it is not easy to say which is the more extraordinary—First, that the Gospel is not a mere declaration of good things; and, secondly, that this is proved from its being “the power of God unto salvation!”—Now, in the first place, I know not what else the Gospel is, than a “declaration of good things.” The entire language of the Scriptures so describes it. The prophets anticipate it, as a message to be brought by divinely commissioned ambassadors:—“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.”*—And how speak the apostles themselves? “We *declare* unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made of God unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again.—Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from

* Isa. lii. 7.

all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”*—“And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, *declaring unto you* the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”†—“Moreover, brethren, *I declare unto you* the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory” (or rather, hold fast) “what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For *I delivered unto you* first of all, that which ye also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”‡—“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life—that which we have seen and heard *declare we unto you*, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This, then, is the message, which we have heard of him, and *declare unto you*, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”§—In such terms do the apostles invariably speak of the Gospel,—as

* Acts xiii. 32, 33; 38, 39.

† 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 1—4.

§ 1 John i. 1, 3, 5.

a testimony, a message, received by them from God, with a commission to declare it to men,—as, in a word, “a *declaration of good things*.”—And no proof of the contrary can be more extraordinary than that which Barclay adduces—namely its being affirmed to be “the power of God unto salvation.” For in what connexions is it that this affirmation is found? What is it that is affirmed to be “the power of God,” and “the power of God unto salvation?” It is the “testimony of Jesus”—the very “declaration of good things” contained in the Gospel. Thus in Rom. i. 15—17. “So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also:—for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” Does not the very phrase “to every one that believeth,” imply that there is *something believed*?—and what is that but the testimony, the message, the *declaration*, delivered by the apostles? What that was, Paul had previously specified, in regard to the *facts* of it—verses 1—4. “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, (which he had promised before by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the

dead :”—and he farther specifies its leading and most essential *principle*,—that which peculiarly constitutes it “the power of God unto salvation”—when he says of it—“For therein is the righteousness of God by faith revealed to faith;”—phraseology, of which Barclay’s anti-evangelical interpretation shall be duly noticed immediately.—Thus again, in 1 Cor. i. 18; 22—24. “For the *preaching of the cross* is to them that perish foolishness; but to us who are *saved* it is *the power of God* :”—“we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ *the power of God*, and the wisdom of God.”—The simple testimony concerning a crucified Saviour proved the mightily efficient instrument, in accomplishing, what all the researches and theories of human wisdom, after a trial of four thousand years, had done nothing whatever to effect :—“For, after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching” (or the preaching of foolishness—i. e. of what was so esteemed by the wise of this world) “to save them that believe.”

3. You may possibly think I am hardly doing Barclay justice, when I represent him as adducing the gospel’s being “the power of God unto salvation” in evidence of its being, in itself, something more than “a declaration of good things.” Let us hear

him, then, a little further:—" Though the outward
 " declaration of the Gospel be taken sometimes for
 " the Gospel, yet it is but figuratively, and by a me-
 " tonymy. For, to speak properly, the Gospel is this
 " inward power and life, which preacheth glad tidings
 " in the hearts of all men, offering salvation unto
 " them, and seeking to redeem them from their ini-
 " quities!"—This is " confusion worse confounded."
 —According to prophets and apostles, the Gospel is
 a declaration of facts and principles; the facts, of the
 birth, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Je-
 sus,—and the principles, involved in the representa-
 tive and substitutionary character sustained by him,
 and the ends for which, in this capacity, he lived, and
 died, and rose again. The angels proclaimed the
 Gospel, when they said, " Behold, we bring you glad
 tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for
 unto you is born this day in the city of David, a
 Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—The Saviour,
 born in Bethlehem, bled and died on Calvary, " fin-
 ishing the work which was given him to do;"—and
 was raised from the dead, in testimony of the divine
 satisfaction in that work. When the apostle speaks
 of the Gospel,—the declaration delivered by him and
 others, respecting a dying and rising Saviour,—as
 " the power of God"—" the power of God unto sal-
 vation," he is manifestly stating not what the Gospel
 is, but what the Gospel *does*,—not its *nature* or *prin-*

ciples, but its *efficiency*. It is by means of it that God is pleased to “save them that believe;” and it is “the power of God,” or God’s mighty instrument, in effecting this salvation,—salvation from the guilt and from the power of sin. It “worketh effectually in them that believe.”—This is simple. But what have we in Barclay? The most unaccountable inversion of thought that ever occupied a sane mind. Look at it. The Gospel is said by Paul *to be* “the power of God:”—“it is the power of God unto salvation.” Mr Barclay, with the *literality* of a true papist, concludes, that, since the Gospel *is* the power of God, this power of God *is* the Gospel. The declaration, or testimony, respecting “Christ crucified” is called the Gospel only “by a metonymy;” “*to speak properly*, the Gospel *is* this inward power and life:”—that is, the Gospel *is* the energy which it exerts,—the Gospel *is* the life which it instrumentally imparts. Then we have this power, which *is* the Gospel, *preaching* the Gospel:—for, says Barclay, “it preacheth glad tidings in the hearts of all men;” and what is the Gospel—what the very meaning of the term—but glad tidings? And what are the glad tidings which are preached in the hearts of men by this “inward power and life?” The answer is in the words which follow:—“offering salvation unto them, and seeking to redeem them from their iniquities!”—so that the animated and triumphant state-

ment of the apostle, respecting the divine efficiency of the Gospel to the actual salvation of men, is reduced to a mere *offer* of salvation, and a mere *moral influence* "*seeking* to redeem" them!—Is not this—"first last, and last first?"—instead of beginning with the offer and ending with the power,—beginning with the power and ending with the offer! Truly, if this was all that Paul meant, he had little to boast of in behalf of his gospel, or of the divine wisdom by which it was devised. A power—a power divine—terminating in an *offer* of salvation!—an "inward power," not actually redeeming, but "seeking to redeem!"—and with what wonderful efficiency, let the whole heathen world bear witness. But, although *offering* and *seeking* were all that Barclay had to claim in behalf of his "inward light," they were *not* all that Paul had to claim in behalf of his gospel; and the contrast is sufficient evidence, that the inward light of Barclay is not the gospel of Paul.

4. There are some criticisms, which it is difficult to refute, because of the very palpability of their unsoundness. We feel, in attempting to meet them, that we are not only letting down the dignity of critical science, but offering an affront to the understandings of our readers or hearers, in the implied supposition of their needing to have the unsoundness exposed. I cannot think the observation too severe

in application to the criticism which makes the apostle say that the Gospel was “preached *IN* every creature which is under heaven!”—This is another specimen of *literal* interpretation, which could never have been adopted except under the prepossessing influence of a previously assumed hypothesis. Whatever be the true principle on which the universal terms employed by the apostle are to be explained (of which by and by) I would only put the question to the candour of any of you who have paid attention to the language of the New Testament, whether, when he speaks of the gospel being “*preached*”—that is, published—proclaimed,—he had at all in his mind the silent, secret, individual suggestions of the “inward light?” When he speaks of preaching, does he not invariably mean the declaration, in God’s name, by his commissioned ministers, of gospel facts and gospel principles? Can any passage be found in his writings in which it has any other sense, or from which it can be inferred that he considered every man on earth as having a preacher of the gospel within himself? Had that been true, then the gospel must have been preached *in* the Colossians, before it was preached *to* them. But the entire strain in which he writes shows us, that he considered them as having known nothing of the Gospel, till in providence, it “*came to them*,” by the labours of its ministers,—till “*the day they heard it*, and knew the

grace of God in truth," through the instrumentality of those who "went every where preaching the word;" and of whom the apostle specifies one by name—" *As ye also learned* of Epaphras, our dear fellow-servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ."—Had it been true, moreover, we might well ask what was Paul about? What was the use of all his multiplied and indefatigable labours? He was busily preaching *to* men that which had already been preached *in* them;—and, since the inward is superior to the outward, coming through no medium, but directly from the Spirit,—better preached than by himself! Yes; better, on Mr Barclay's own representation. The outward declaration, according to him, is called the gospel only by a metonymy; the "inward power and life" being the true and proper gospel. They had, therefore, the reality before; and Paul brought them only the figure:—they had what, "speaking properly," was the gospel; and by the preaching of the apostle they got only the metonymy:—they had the "inward power and life" in themselves; and then, by Paul's ministry, came the declaration to the ear!—Was this, then, do you really think, what the apostle meant? I appeal to his entire writings for the answer. I could quote passage after passage from each of his epistles, in proof that, in his language, *preaching* has invariably the sense I have assigned to it. I take one as a specimen; and

I select it for this very reason, that Mr Barclay attempts to harmonize even it with his system; and I am anxious to show you with what palpable perversion. The passage is Rom. x. 14—18. “How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, that bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel (the glad tidings.) For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily: their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.”—Respecting this portion of Scripture, nothing, as it seems to me, can be plainer than the following positions. First, that the gospel of which he speaks, as believed by some and disbelieved by others, was the “testimony” or “glad tidings” delivered to men by the ministry of himself and his fellow-ambassadors. He calls it, in verse 8, “the word of faith *which we preach*.” Secondly, that this testimony contained a declaration of *facts*, such as never were made known to men in general by any other description of ministry, or channel of commu-

nication ;—never by that which you denominate the “inward light,” or direct illumination of the Spirit. These facts are, especially, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ :—“if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that *God hath raised him from the dead*, thou shalt be saved,” verse 9 ; the fact of God’s raising him from the dead implying, of course, the fact of his previous death. Thirdly, that in order to these facts, and the principles connected with them, being known and believed, it was necessary that preachers should be commissioned and accredited of God, so that the testimony declared might appear as coming from him, and resting on his authority—“How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?”—that is, sent, or commissioned, not by men, but by God.—I conceive the leading object of the apostle, in the passage, to be—to place the new or Gospel dispensation on an equality, in regard to its divine authentication, with the old or legal dispensation ; that of the apostles, with that of the prophets. The one must have its divinely accredited messengers, as well as the other. It must not be said of the preachers of the new covenant, “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran ; I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.” This seems the import of the question “How shall they preach except they be sent?”

They whose feet, upon the mountains, brought the “glad tidings of good things,” were ambassadors commissioned by Jehovah, and bearing his credentials, as the ancient prophets did. The subsequent verses, when correctly translated, are designed to confirm this sentiment. It should be noted, that the word rendered by our translators, in verse 17th, “*hearing*,” is the same word which, in verse 16th, is translated “*report*.” It is quite true, that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;” that is, that the word of God must be preached before it can be heard, and heard before it can be believed:—nor do I deny, that this is in perfect harmony with the spirit of the preceding context—“How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” The true rendering, however, appears rather to be, in harmony with the view just given of the apostle’s design—“But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then, faith cometh by a report, and the report by the word—(that is, by the authority or command)—of God.” This rendering makes no material difference on the meaning of the first clause; inasmuch as the Report must necessarily be brought to the ear and *heard*, in order to its being believed. But in the second clause, it gives an interesting and important addition to the sense,—namely, that the

Report, by the hearing of which it is that faith cometh, is published by the authority or command of God. This is all simple and consistent. Let us see how the passage is disposed of by Barclay:—

“ But the apostle Paul opens and illustrates this matter yet more, Rom. x. where he declares that the word which he preached (now the word which he preached, and the gospel which he preached, and whereof he was made a minister, is one and the same) ‘ is not far off, but nigh in the heart and in the mouth:’ which done, he frameth, as it were, the objection of our adversaries in the 14th and 15th verses—‘ How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?’ This he answers in the 18th verse, saying, ‘ But I say, have they not heard? Yes, verily; their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world;’ insinuating that this divine preacher had sounded in the ears and hearts of all men; for of the outward apostles that was not true, neither then, nor many hundred years after; yea, for ought we know, there may be yet great and spacious nations and kingdoms, that never have heard of Christ or his apostles, as outwardly.”*—“ This divine preacher:”—that is *the inward light*! Now, my friends, I must

* Apology, page 71.

frankly confess to you, that I should feel it quite a hopeless task to argue with any man, who, in sober earnest, after admitting that “the word which Paul preached and the gospel which Paul preached, and whereof he was made a minister, is one and the same,” can contend, that the preaching of this gospel, spoken of by the apostle, means the preaching of it, in the minds of mankind universally, by the “inward light.” For observe:—if there be a difficulty in accounting for the *universality* of the expressions, as opposed to the fact that so many thousands and millions of mankind “have never heard of Christ or his apostles as outwardly;” the difficulty is not less which is involved in the assertion that the gospel preached by Paul is universally preached by the light within. Nay, the difficulty is still greater:—for, whereas, in the one case, it is denied that the gospel was actually preached by the apostles *to all*,—we feel ourselves warranted, distinctly to deny, in the other case, that this gospel is preached by the “light within” *to any*. We know how extensive, how general and indiscriminate, was the proclamation of the gospel by the apostles and other heralds of salvation:—but can one solitary instance be adduced of the “universal inward light” imparting to the human mind the knowledge of the facts, and principles, and promises of that gospel? To what man on earth has the “faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came

into the world to save sinners," been made known by the inward light, independently of the written or preached word? In what heathen country has there ever been found, otherwise than as the result of missionary embassies, the knowledge that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures?" I repeat what I have said, that, whatever difficulty there may be in reconciling with fact the affirmed universality of the preaching of the Gospel in apostolic times, that difficulty is in no respect lessened by introducing, as a preacher, the "inward light;" inasmuch as not an individual of those who did not receive the knowledge of the gospel by the external ministry of the servants of Christ, ever obtained that knowledge by the internal ministry of the light:—no, not one. The introduction of this imaginary preacher makes no difference in the case whatever;—unless any one will undertake to prove, that mankind universally have all along been in possession, before, and during, and since, the apostolic embassy, of "the knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent;" a position, of which the successful proof would, at the same time, nullify the utility and the worth of that embassy, by showing that the blessing intended to be imparted by it was already possessed!

5. Of the correctness of the statement we have

made, that it is not the gospel of Christ that is made known by the "inward light," we have, alas! melancholy evidence in Mr Barclay's own representation. Mark how it is, according to him, that the "inward power and life," preaching *in* every creature, operates to salvation:—"Those," says he, "of whom the apostle speaks had no outward gospel preached to them; so that it was by the inward manifestation of the knowledge of God *in them*, which is indeed the gospel preached in man, that 'the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;' that is, it *reveals to the soul that which is just, good, and righteous*; and that, as the soul receiveth it and believes, righteousness comes more and more to be revealed, from one degree of faith unto another."—Never, surely, was there a more flagrant misappropriation of evangelical terms to an anti-evangelical purpose. "The righteousness of God by faith,"—"the righteousness of God revealed to faith"—are phrases of which the meaning cannot be misunderstood by the careful student of Paul's writings. They are used by him to designate that imputed righteousness, of which I have spoken at large in my last letter,—the righteousness provided by God for the justification of sinners;—"even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, *unto* all, and *upon* all them that believe:"—the righteousness of which he says, in terms formerly

explained—"God hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that *we might be made the righteousness of God in him*;"—and which was the object of his own supreme desire—"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is by the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by faith."—But, according to Barclay, and in harmony with his identification of two things so distinct in their nature as the blessings of justification and sanctification,—“the righteousness of God revealed to faith” is the discovery to the mind of “that which is just, good, and righteous,”—in personal character and conduct; a discovery which, in the following page, he identifies with “knowing by that inward law, and manifestation of the knowledge of God in them, *to distinguish betwixt good and evil!*”—And this is the way in which, according to your standard authority, the “inward light” preaches *the Gospel*,—“preaches glad tidings in the hearts of all men,”—preaches what Paul preached! I at once deny this to be the Gospel at all; and am verily persuaded, that the apostle of the Gentiles, the great inspired champion of justification by grace through faith, would have

“ shaken his raiment,” and indignantly disowned the comment, as at utter variance with the doctrine it was meant to illustrate, and as dictated by another spirit than that which he had himself received.— There can be little difficulty, to be sure, in explaining universal terms when used respecting the dissemination of the Gospel,—if we are allowed to consider the universal knowledge of that Gospel—“ the very Gospel which Paul preached, and of which he was made a minister”—as resolvable into the same thing with a universal sense of right and wrong, or an acquaintance (and even that sadly partial) with the rule of duty.

6. There remains to be noticed, in this extraordinary passage of the Apology, yet another singular instance of the “ confounding of things that differ.” He applies to the discoveries of the inward light, the terms which are employed by Paul with relation to the manifestation of Deity in his works:—“ For
 “ though, as the following verse saith, the outward
 “ creation declares the power of God, yet that which
 “ may be known of God is *manifest within*: by
 “ which inward manifestation we are made capable
 “ to see and discern the eternal power and Godhead
 “ in the outward creation ; so, were it not for this
 “ inward principle, we could no more understand the
 “ invisible things of God by the outward visible crea-
 “ tion, than a blind man can see and discern the va-

"riety of shapes and colours, or judge of the beauty
 "of the outward creation. Therefore he saith, first,
 "that which may be known of God is manifest *in*
 "*them* ; and in and by that they may read and un-
 "derstand the power and Godhead in those things
 "that are outward and visible."—Let us analyse this
 a little.—1. When the apostle says, "That which
 may be known of God is manifest in them,—for
 God hath showed it unto them ;" he immediately
 explains the meaning of its being "shown unto
 them" by adding—"For, since the creation of the
 world, the invisible things of God, even his eternal
 power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being under-
 stood by the things that are made : so that they are
 without excuse." This is the manifestation, or
 "showing," meant by the apostle. When, therefore,
 Barclay says—"Now that which may be known of
 God is known *by the Gospel*, which was manifest in
 them ;"—he not only misappropriates terms,—he
 misapprehends the entire strain and purport of the
 apostle's reasoning, and nullifies its conclusiveness.
 The object of the apostle manifestly is, to demon-
 strate the inexcusableness of the Heathen in their
 ignorance of God, notwithstanding the knowledge of
 Him originally possessed, and the clear manifesta-
 tions, subsisting amongst them, in endless variety, in
 all the works of his hands and ways of his providence ;
 their sinful alienation from God, as displayed in this

ignorance, and in the practical results of it afterwards enumerated ; and their consequent need of the merciful provisions of the Gospel. So far is he from affirming that they had the Gospel already, and the knowledge of God communicated by it ; that his precise and exclusive aim, from the 18th verse of chapter i. to the 9th verse of chapter iii. is to establish the universal sinfulness and guilt of Gentiles and of Jews ; and, having established this point, he deduces from it, as to both, the impossibility of justification by works, and the necessity of the grace provided by the Gospel,—that grace, the exercise of which to sinners of mankind it was the grand object of the Redeemer's mediation to render consistent with the demands of the divine law, and the glory of the divine righteousness.—2. Barclay speaks of the “inward manifestation” as indispensable to our at all perceiving and understanding the outward,—equally indispensable to our “seeing and discerning the eternal power and Godhead in the outward creation,”—as sight is to the discernment of colour and beauty. If so, it follows, that the possession of this “inward manifestation” is necessary to men's accountability for their ignorance of God, and to their being, what the apostle declares they were, “without excuse.” And what is this inward manifestation ? It is “the inward manifestation of the knowledge of God *in them*, which is indeed the Gospel preached

in man." It comes, then, to this:—that the *knowledge of God*, and the knowledge of him *by the Gospel*, is necessary to render the *ignorance of him* inexcusable!—Nor is the case much mended, in regard to the common sense of it, when we are told that "those Gentiles, of whom the apostle speaks, knew by that *inward law* and manifestation of the knowledge of God in them, to distinguish betwixt good and evil:"—for, taking *this* view of the "inward manifestation," what have we?—Why, the knowledge of God and of the conduct he requires of us, necessary to our being capable of discerning the outward evidences of his existence!—Did I speak too strongly, when I said, that this "inward light" "leads to bewilder?" Here, as on some other occasions, it appears involving in inextricable perplexity, and that too on points in themselves characterized by their simplicity,—an otherwise sensible and acute mind; confounding in it law and gospel, nature and grace; misplacing the grounds of human responsibility; and embarrassing with an anomalous intricacy the very simplest principles of evidence.

Well, you may say; be it so:—but still, after all you have said, the universal terms employed by the apostle remain unaccounted for. How is it, that he speaks of the Gospel as having been "preached to every creature which is under heaven," when, in point of fact, there were so many millions of the hu-

man race, who had not at the time, and who have not even yet, obtained the knowledge of it?—I answer, first of all, that, whatever difficulty exists, it is not diminished, although it may be shifted, by the introduction of your universal preacher, the light within; inasmuch as, whatever this preacher taught, it never made known, to a single individual, a single fact, or a single principle, of that gospel which Paul represents as having been preached *to all*. The introduction, therefore, of the “inward light” brings the statement no nearer to an accordance with fact,—if the fact stated be indeed absolute universality. There is, in truth, no ground whatever, on which it *can* be so understood. To suppose the apostle to have meant this, at the very time when he was himself busily engaged in carrying the Gospel to new stations,—in breaking up new ground for the seed of the word,—is to suppose him to write, not only without extraordinary inspiration, but without ordinary understanding. His own language is—“Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation; but, as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand,” Rom. xv. 20, 21. And he was still in the indefatigable prosecution of the same work, when, three or four years after, he wrote his Epistle to the Colossians. His language, in

both his epistles,—and indeed in all of them, the earliest and the latest alike,—is the same as to the universality of the proclamation of the Gospel; than which we could not desire a clearer evidence that he did not intend it to be taken in its strict and literal acceptation.—I might avail myself of the fact, that, in ordinary practice, both in speech and in writing, phrases expressing universality are used in an indefinite or general sense, when the meaning intended to be conveyed is, not *all without exception*, but simply a *large proportion*, or, even more limitedly, a *great many*. Thus, when it is said, Mat. iii. 5, 6. that there went out to John the Baptist “Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins,”—no more is meant than, in the language of Luke, “*the multitude* that came forth to be baptized of him,” Luke iii. 6. But, without insisting upon this, observe more particularly—

1. The terms in which the commission, as given at different times to the apostles, expresses the extent of their duty. Mark xvi. 15. “Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*.” Matth. xxviii. 19. “Go ye, therefore, and teach *all nations*.” Luke xxiv. 47. “That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among *all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem.” Acts i. 8. “Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jeru-

saalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto *the uttermost part of the earth.*"—Now, it will not surely be contended, that by the apostles personally, during their own lives, all this, in the *strict* acceptance of the terms, was to be done. If so, a commission was given them, which it was not within the bounds of possibility for them to execute; and they failed—necessarily failed—to fulfil their charge. But this would not be doing justice either to them or to their Master. He did not enjoin impossibilities; nor were they unfaithful to their trust. The language must be understood, not of what they were *personally* to effect, but of the *ultimate design*, in regard to the gospel. It expresses what Dr S. H. Cox happily calls "*the catholic largeness of the new dispensation.*"

2. Each of the different phrases, employed in the different forms of the commission, is used by the apostle Paul in stating the fact of its apostolic execution. Thus in Col. i. 6. "Which is come unto you," (he speaks of "the word of the truth of the gospel,") "as it is in *all the world:*"—Col. i. 23. "Which ye have heard, and which was preached to *every creature* which is under heaven:—Rom. xvi. 26. "But now is made manifest, and—according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to *all nations* for the obedience of faith:—Rom. x. 18. "Have they not heard? Yes, verily: their sound

went into *all the earth*, and their words to *the ends of the world*.”—Now, if the phrases, when used in *giving* the commission, signified, and could signify, no more, in regard to the personal ministry of the apostles, than that they should proceed, in that ministry, *on the principle of universality*,—that their field should be the world,—that they should proclaim the gospel, with which they were put in trust, to men of all nations indiscriminately,—making their aim, in harmony with the divine purpose, the evangelization of mankind ;—then, when the same phrases are used, to express the *execution* of the commission, they ought to be interpreted on the same principle, as conveying no more than that they were acting up to the full spirit of the charge given them,—that, to the utmost limit of their personal ability, during their own span of life, they “made disciples of all nations,” and “preached the gospel to every creature,”—leaving the further prosecution of the same work,—the following out of the purpose of the crucified and glorified Redeemer,—to the pious and benevolent zeal of his ministers and people in after ages ; and, at the same time, that, even during the period of their own ministry, they had made rapid and widely extended advances.

3. In harmony with this remark, it may be observed, that the very phraseology used in the commission, and in the record of its fulfilment, is em-

ployed on occasions when absolute or literal universality is out of the question. Thus in Jer. xxvii. 7. it is said that “*all nations*” should be subject to the king of Babylon, and that God would punish every nation that refused to receive his yoke :—in Dan. ii. 38, 39. the dominion of the same king of Babylon is represented as extending “*wheresoever the children of men dwell* ;” and the third kingdom that was to arise after his (the Macedo-Grecian) as “bearing rule over *all the earth* :”—in Dan. iv. 22. the empire of the Babylonian monarch is described as reaching “*to the end of the earth* :”—in the decree of Cyrus, Ezra i. 2. that prince says, “The Lord God of heaven hath given me *all the kingdoms of the earth* :”—in Math. xxiv. 9. our Lord tells his twelve apostles that they should be “hated of *all nations* for his name’s sake ;” yet they themselves could not be hated beyond the limits to which their ministry extended, —which affords a further proof of the general and undefined sense in which the terms of their commission ought to be interpreted :—in Rev. xiv. 8. Babylon is said to have “made *all nations* to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication ;” and in chap. xviii. 23. “*all nations*” are affirmed to have been “deceived by her sorceries :”—in Rom. xi. 12, 15. the apostle, speaking of the fall and rejection of the Jews, says—“If the fall of them be the riches of *the world*, and the diminishing of them the riches of

the Gentiles, how much more their fulness !”—and—
 “ If the casting away of them be the reconciling of *the world*, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead ? ”—This last is an important passage. It is a clear instance of “ the world ” being used for “ the Gentiles ; ” and that, not in the sense of absolute universality, but indefinitely :—for, had it been used in the sense of absolute universality, it is evident that the effect expressed as arising from the “ casting off ” of the Jews would have been *the greatest possible* ; so that the predicted effect of their “ reception ” or restoration, could not have gone beyond it ; for what can go beyond absolute universality ?—what can comprehend more than the whole ? No proof can be clearer than this, that, in the apostle’s language, when the gospel is said to have “ come in all the world,” he is to be understood as speaking of the Gentiles in the same indefinite way—of men of all nations, indiscriminately, becoming partakers of its tidings and its blessings.* And in the other passages cited, we have evidence equally satisfactory, that the phrases, “ all nations,” “ all the earth,” “ the ends of the earth,” “ all the kingdoms of the earth,”

* I have avoided reference to other passages in which the word “ *World* ” occurs, because, though they might have served my purpose, the word so translated is not the same as that used in the apostolic commission, Mark xvi. 15. which is *κοσμος*.

&c. are susceptible (and that is all we need) of the same indefinite application.

In extending so much my observations on this subject, I have borne in mind that I am writing to *Friends*, with whom the universality of the terms, and the inconsistency of such universality with the literal fact as to the outward gospel, form together one of the main grounds for the introduction of the “inward light,” as the only means of bringing the statement and the fact into harmony. But into literal harmony it does not, in reality, bring them. It leaves the difficulty just where it found it. For I must again challenge all the Friends on earth to produce an instance, in which this inward light,—this universal preacher,—has made known the gospel contained in the apostolic testimony,—has made it known, either in its facts or in its doctrines ;—a single instance, in which a sinner, independently of all outward means, has learned from it, that Jesus Christ “was delivered up for our offences, and raised again for our justification.” And the sinner who has not learned this, has not learned the gospel. Even whatever benefit he may be supposed indirectly to derive from it, under the new covenant system of mercy, still it cannot, without an unwarrantable abuse of terms, be spoken of as having been *preached* either *to* him or *in* him.

Another reason for extending my observations on

Mr Barclay's commentary on the passage in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, has been, that they have a bearing on the explanation of other texts which are referred to in support of the *universal inward light*;—and more especially on what I may justly call your *text of texts*,—that which has been quoted as one of the main pillars of your system, by every Friend, from the days of George Fox to the present hour.—John i. 9. “THAT WAS THE TRUE LIGHT, WHICH LIGHTETH EVERY MAN THAT COMETH INTO THE WORLD.”—Allow me now a few additional observations on this text;—a text to which all others may fairly be considered as, to such a degree, subordinate, that, if this be satisfactorily disposed of, there is not one of them that can stand for a moment in our way.

Before proceeding to these, it may not be unreasonable to put you on your guard against a tendency of the mind, from which we are all at times, in danger,—the tendency, I mean, of the habitual use of particular phraseology so to fix a certain sense of it in our thoughts, as to render it superlatively difficult to dislodge it. It is like drawing out a thread that crosses and re-crosses, in every possible direction, the entire texture of our system, and enters into every figure in the pattern. Here, I am persuaded, (you must excuse me for saying it, for the apprehension is founded in those natural tendencies which are common to

you with myself,) will be found to lie, with many of you, the principal hinderance to conviction. “The light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” is a phrase which, since the very rise of your community, has been so appropriated to a certain sense, and in that sense has been so invariably used, in publications, in preaching, and in daily converse, that I have every allowance to make for the strong hold it must have taken of your minds, and the tenacity of your predilections in its behalf.—I trust, at the same time, that, with regard to any critical strictures I may now offer on the passage, you will give me credit, for the *bonâ fide* conviction that they are founded in the law and usage of the original Greek, and supported by their analogy to the same evangelist’s style of expression in other places, and are not, in any degree, invented to serve a purpose.—You will do me the further justice of taking them in connexion with my former general reasonings on the subject of the “inward light”—which it is impossible now to resume,—as well as with what has just been advanced on Col. i. 23. and Rom. x. 14—18.—and especially on the frequently restricted, or general and indefinite, use of universal terms.

In our received version of John i. 6—10. there occur several *supplements*. Now, it will not be questioned by any critic, that, when a passage can be simply and literally rendered without such sup-

plements, the rendering is entitled to preference. If any one, then, acquainted with Greek, and with the peculiarities of this evangelist's style, will take up the original, and lay aside entirely the present *punctuation*, (in which, I need not tell you, there is no authority,) he will, I am persuaded, be satisfied, that the following is the correct rendering of the verses : —“ There was a man sent from God (or sent forth by God) whose name was John. The same came for a testimony,* that he might bear witness concerning the light, that all through him might believe. He was not himself the light, but was to bear witness concerning the light. The true light, which lighteth every man, coming into the world, was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.” †

* *Eis μαρτυριαν*—I have rendered this literally : *μαρτυρια* signifies, not the *witness*, but the *testimony* delivered by the witness. John came, *to deliver a testimony*, as immediately explained in the next clause.—Probably, indeed, our translators used the word *witness* here in the sense of *testimony* ; since they have done so repeatedly elsewhere, and the word still retains its double meaning. See for examples, John v. 31—36. Titus i. 13. 1 John v. 9, &c.

† The words in the original are these, and are here pointed agreeably to the version of them in the text :—6. *Εγενετο ανθρωπος απεσταλμενος παρα θεου, ονομα αυτω Ιωαννης.* 7. *Ουτος ηλθεν εις μαρτυριαν, ινα μαρτυρηση περι του φωτος, ινα παντες πιστευσωσι δι' αυτου.* 8. *Ουκ ην εκεινος το φως, αλλ' ινα μαρτυρηση περι του φωτος ην.* 9. *Το φως το αληθινου, ο φωτιζει παντα ανθρωπον, ερχομενον εις τον κοσμον,* 10. *εν τω κοσμω ην, και ο κοσμος δι' αυτου*

You will perceive, that (with a number of eminent critics,) I consider the words “coming into the world” as more naturally connected with the word *Light*, than with the word *man*. My chief reason for thinking so is,—not that, when connected with “every man,” the words are pleonastic; for it would be far from being a solitary instance of pleonasm in the style of this writer;—besides that the pleonasm, in this instance, might be used to give particularity and emphasis to the “every man,” strengthening the idea of its being *without exception*.*—My reason is rather, the correspondence of the words, when joined to “the true light” with the phraseology of this writer, on the same subject, at other times, and

εγενετο, και ο κοσμος αυτου ουκ εγνω.—The placing of the *ην*, which, according to the common punctuation, begins verse 9th, at the end of verse 8th, precludes the necessity both of the supplement “*was sent*” in the eighth, and of the more anomalous supplement of the demonstrative pronoun “*that*” in the ninth; and, at the same time, by furnishing a nominative to the verb “*was*” in the beginning of the tenth verse, clears the construction of all embarrassment. I submit, too, whether the *ερχομενον εις τον κοσμον, εν τη κοσμω ην*,—when connected with the *το φως*, be not quite in accordance with the ordinary style of this evangelist. I grant, however, that the *ερχομενον* may be joined with either *ανθρωπον* or *φως*. The reasons for joining it with the latter are assigned in the text.

* The use of the phrase, in connexion with *ανθρωπον*, by the Rabbinical writers has also been pleaded in support of our authorized translation. No great stress, however, can be laid upon this. The idiom is certainly neither common in the scriptures, nor in classical authors.

with that of the sacred penmen in general. "Coming into the world" is a phrase of such frequent application to the Messiah, as to be almost a descriptive designation of him. "Then these men, when they had seen the miracle which Jesus did, said, This is, of a truth, that prophet that should *come into the world*:"—"For judgment *am I come into this world*, that they who see not might see, and that they who see might be made blind:"—"She saith unto him, Yea, Lord; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should *come into the world*:"—"I came forth from the Father, and am *come into the world*; again I leave the world, and go to the Father:"—"To this end was I born, and for this cause *came I into the world*, that I should bear witness unto the truth:"—"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus *came into the world* to save sinners:"—"Wherefore, *when he cometh into the world*, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me."*—And more particularly is it deserving of notice, that the phrase occurs in connexion with the same designation of the Messiah as that in John i. 9. "I am *come a light into the world*, that whosoever followeth me should not walk in darkness:"—"This is the condemnation, that *light is*

* John vi. 14. ix. 39. xi. 27. xvi. 28. xviii. 37. 1 Tim. i. 15. Heb. x. 5.

come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*—If you take these parallel passages together, you will see reason to think, with me, that the ἐρχομενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον—the “coming into the world,” was much more probably meant by John, in the text under consideration, to be connected with “the true light” than with the “every man.”—I might quote, along with these, those places in which Jesus is spoken of as having been *sent into the world*; that phrase being a precise counterpart to his *coming* into the world. But it is unnecessary. I may, however, add, that the phraseology before us in this text,—“The true Light—coming into the world, was in the world,”—that is, was in the world in this capacity or relation,—corresponds with the repeated language of our Lord himself, as put into his lips by the same evangelist:—“Then said Jesus to them again, I am the Light of the world:”—“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”†—These considerations bring it, in my mind, if not to an absolute certainty, yet as near to a certainty as possible, that the translation proposed of John i. 9. is the correct one.

But supposing this to be the case, you may allege, we have still the affirmation that this Light “lighteth

* John xii. 46. iii. 19.

† John viii. 12. ix. 4.

every man.”—“The term ‘every man,’ ” you may be disposed to say, “is in itself very strong and precise. It denotes *every individual man*; and, since “there is nothing in the context to limit its signification, it must be considered as signifying the *whole of mankind.*” *—You must, however, be sensible, that the transference of the phrase “that cometh into the world” from this connexion to connexion with “the Light” takes off not a little from the emphasis with which the idea of *universal individuality* (if I may so express myself) is conveyed. I hope you will not be tempted by this consideration—or, if tempted, will not yield to the temptation—to resist the evidence by which the transference appears to be so clearly warranted, and, from attachment to your master principle, as well as from the force of habit,—the habit both of thought and speech,—to stickle for the old way.—“*Every man*” is, I grant you, a universal phrase. But that it is not, in the present instance, to be taken in the strict and literal sense of absolute universality,—as meaning every individual of mankind, without exception, the following considerations may serve to prove; and they will, at the same time, bring to the proof the above assumption of Mr Gurney, that “there is nothing in the context to limit its signification.”

* Joseph John Gurney.

1. We have instances, in the style of this evangelist, of phrases employed in a *general* sense,—to signify what was the ordinary or prevailing fact; which are so far from being without exception, that exceptions are mentioned by himself, even though with the appearance of contradiction. One of these occurs in the very verses that follow the text under consideration. “The true light—was in the world, and the world was made by him, and *the world knew him not*. He came unto his own, and *his own received him not*. But *as many as received him*, to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believed on his name.”—“*The world knew him not*”—“*his own received him not*.” The designations are universal, according to their respective subjects;—“the world” meaning *mankind*, and “his own” the *people of the Jews*, his “kindred according to the flesh.” The remark I now make is not at all affected by the question, whether the verses relate to “the Word” in his divinely pre-existent state, or to “the Word made flesh.” The remark is, that the designations are used *indefinitely*, as expressive of the general fact; but not without exceptions. There were those in “the world,”—there were those among “his own,” who *did* know him,—who *did* receive him; for “to *as many as received him*, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.”—We have another instance, of a similar kind, in chap. iii. 32, 33. “That which

he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and *no man receiveth* his testimony. *He that hath received* his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." Here, it is obvious, the "no man" (*οὐδεις*, no one) is not to be understood literally and absolutely, but in the same indefinite or general sense—*comparatively few*. "Very few," says Mr Scott, "and, as it were, none, compared with the whole nation, received his testimony."—"No man," we might say,—“no one” “is in itself very strong and precise. It denotes *no individual*.” Yet we see we should be mistaken in so understanding it. In John’s phraseology, “No man receiveth his testimony” does *not* mean that *every individual* rejected it:—“the world knew him not” does *not* mean that *none* of the world knew him: “—his own received him not” does *not* mean that *none* of his own received him.

2. The very phrase, in all its pointedness and precision—*παντα ανθρωπον*—is at times used with an obviously limited application. So the apostle Paul employs it, Col. i. 2. “Whom we preach, warning *every man*, and teaching *every man* in all wisdom, that we may present *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus.”—What means the apostle by this “very strong and precise” phrase? Not surely, that, in point of fact, he actually warned and taught “every individual man!” No: but that every man was embraced in his wishes, and every man faithfully warned and

taught whom he could, by any means, bring within the reach of his influence.—Yet it cannot be affirmed that, in this case, there is any thing “in the context to limit its application.” The Apostle is speaking at the time of the universality of the gospel. He had used the very words which, we have seen, Barclay interprets as expressing its absolute and individual universality—representing it as “preached to every creature which is under heaven;” and had then spoken of the “mystery” (or revealed secret) of its divinely purposed extension, in all its privileges and blessings, to the Gentiles. There is nothing, then, to limit the import of the “every man,” but the *actually known and limited extent of the Apostle’s ministry*. Why, then, should not the terms, in the text on which we are commenting, be understood with a similar limitation? “There is nothing in the context to limit its application,” says Mr Gurney. Supposing this were true, may not the same obvious principle of limitation find a legitimate place in this case as in the other? Should it not be understood as limited by *the actual extent to which the light spoken of has shone?*—Do not say, my friends, that this is to beg the question, by assuming that it has actually shone only to a limited extent.—For observe—

3. The only ground on which Friends can maintain its universality is—its being an *inward*, not an *outward* light; and the only ground on which they

can maintain its being an inward light is its affirmed universality. It is a light, they say, which "lighteth every man:"—but the outward light of the Gospel does not lighten every man:—therefore the light spoken of cannot be the outward light of the Gospel, or Christ as the mere subject of the Gospel testimony; it must be an inward light,—for in this sense only can it be possessed by all,—can it shine in all,—can it lighten all.—Now, *this* is to beg the question. We affirm, on the contrary, that the light spoken of in the passage *is not* an inward light,—that it *is* an outward light;—that this is a plain matter of fact; and that in conformity with this ought the terms of universality, used regarding it, to be interpreted. THE LIGHT IS CHRIST. It is a person; distinguished from John, who "was not himself the light, but was sent to bear witness of it:"—and we know to whom he bore his testimony, and assigned the honour. We have seen too, how Jesus appropriates the designation to himself:—"I am the light of the world;"—"I am come a light into the world;"—"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." He was so, by the full and clear discoveries which it was the object of his mission to make,—and to make, not to the Jews alone but also to the Gentiles,—of truths which had been but partially and obscurely revealed to the one, and respecting which the other, during preceding ages, had lain

in the darkness of ignorance. It is true, that the Eternal Word had been the medium of Divine communications to men, in as far as these had been vouchsafed, from the beginning. But still, his personal mission and ministry are represented as the period of illumination ; the period of which this same inspired evangelist says, “ The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” Hence the distinction between the “ times past” as the times in which “ God in sundry portions and in diverse manners spake unto the fathers *by the prophets*,” and “ these last days,” in which He “ hath spoken unto us *by his Son*.” Passages might be multiplied that speak of the superior light of divine discovery emanating from this point. “ No man hath seen God at any time : the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him :”—“ And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest ; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways ; to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of sins ; through the tender mercies of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us ; to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace :”—“ Be not thou, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner ; but be thou a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of

God : who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began ; but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”* —The prophets had predicted the coming of Christ under the same image, as the rising of a light upon a world of darkness :—“ The people that sat in darkness saw a great light ; and to them that sat in the region of the shadow of death light is sprung up.” And in similar terms, the aged and devout Simeon, anticipating, with benevolent joy, the illumination of the world, as well as exulting in the honour put upon his own people in the birth of the infant Redeemer, and ultimately to arise to them from his mission and work, speaks of him as Jehovah’s “ salvation, which He had prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.”—Such passages of Scripture evidently represent Christ as a Light of discovery and manifestation of truth,—making God known,—making salvation known,—making the way of peace known,—making life and immortality known,—with a clearness and a fulness with which they never had been

* John i. 18. Luke i. 76—79. 2 Tim. i. 8—10.

made known before, even to those who had been favoured with divine revelation;—and making them known to others, of whom it could not, or hardly could, be said that they had any previous knowledge of them whatever,—“darkness covering the earth, and gross darkness the people.”—When Friends, then, speak of the “Christ within,” and the “inward light,” they use phraseology that is not at all in harmony with these representations. They speak of a light which, instead of arising at a predicted period, to dispel the previous darkness, had been actually enjoyed by all mankind from the beginning; and they speak, moreover, of a light, which, though thus possessed by all before and by all since the fulness of time, has in no one instance imparted to any mind a single discovery of that truth which Jesus Christ came to reveal, and the revelation of which it is that constitutes Him “the Light of the world.” The “portion of the light of the Spirit of Christ” which, according to Mr Gurney, is imparted to every man, does not, most assuredly, and according to his own admissions, communicate to those who possess it any such discovery. How, then, can they, in any propriety of speech, be said to be “lighted” by the true Light, when, in point of fact, they are in utter darkness with regard to what he came to reveal, and the revelation of which it is that, chiefly at least if not exclusively, obtains him the designation. If the

only principle on which the Friends can give consistency to the universal terms employed by the evangelist, is a principle which either, converting the Christ who died on Calvary into a mystical abstraction, supposes a “*Christ within*” independently of all knowledge of the Christ without,—or assumes a “*light within*” imparted from Christ “the true Light,” which leaves those who possess it in entire ignorance of Himself and of every truth which he came to make known to men,—I must be allowed to regard it as a principle altogether inadmissible in sound and rational interpretation, and involving difficulties incomparably greater than any with which they can show our explanation of such terms to be embarrassed.

4. The representation of “every man that cometh into the world” as “lighted by the true Light;”—or, in other terms, (which in the phraseology of the Friends are equivalent) the representation of every man as having the Spirit of Christ, or as having Christ within—is at variance with the whole language of the Bible, and with not a few of its most explicit and pointed declarations.—First, it is out of harmony with the current language of Scripture, to speak of “every man that cometh into the world” as actually lighted by the true Light. In addition to the passages already quoted, which represent mankind as in darkness, multitudes more of a similar character might

be adduced. But allow me to request your attention to the statement in verse 5. of this same chapter—"The Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." On the precise import of the verb rendered "comprehended" I do not dwell. It is by some translated "apprehended," by others "admitted." The question I have to ask you is one which is unaffected by this point of verbal criticism. It is this:—if it be indeed true that the illumination diffused by the "True Light" is universal,—if every man is actually enlightened by it, and enlightened inwardly,—where and in whom is it that "the Light shineth *in darkness*?" If the true light lighteth every man born into the world, then every man born into the world is *in light*; none of all mankind are in darkness. But the very purpose of the Gospel is declared to be "to turn men from darkness to light:"—and believers are said to have been "once darkness" but now to be "light in the Lord,"—"called out of darkness into God's marvellous light." When we regard Christ as the Light, and as shining by the dissemination of truth amidst the darkness of spiritual ignorance and depravity, the meaning of such language is plain. No one is at a loss to understand it. But the consistency and propriety of it are destroyed, when we are taught to believe that all men already have the light,—the light of Christ,—saving light,—the light of the very gospel which Paul

preached. To apply such terms to the heathen, is not only to burlesque the very name of *light*,—reducing it absolutely to nothing; it is contrary to the entire style, on such subjects, of the divine word.—The same observation is true respecting the “Christ within.” If every man born into the world has Christ within him, how is it that the apostle speaks of those who had heard the Gospel from himself and his fellow-ministers, as having, previously to their receiving it, been “without Christ?”—and how comes “Christ in them the hope of glory” to be their distinction from others who remained in unbelief?—What, too, are we to think of the affirmation that all have the Spirit of Christ, when our Lord himself, in promising his Spirit to his disciples, gives the promise with so special a restriction to them in contradistinction from the world,—“even the Spirit of truth, *whom the world cannot receive*, because it seeth him not neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he *dwelleth with you, and shall be in you* ;” —and when the possession of his Spirit is pronounced the only sure evidence of vital union with himself, and the absence of his Spirit the evidence of the contrary—“Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you: now if any man *have not* the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his?” If “a measure of the light of the Spirit of Christ” is given to every man, who are they who

have not his Spirit?—"Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." If all have a measure of the Spirit of Christ, what becomes of this peculiarity and test of Sonship? Is it to be found only in the *degree* of the divine communication? If so, at what point in the scale is the evidence of Sonship to be fixed? There is no hint of such restriction, either in this text or in any other. To have the Spirit, is to be a child of God; to be without the Spirit, is to be a child of the wicked one. "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, *because he hath given us of his Spirit:*"—"These are they who separate themselves, sensual, *having not the Spirit.*" And to have the Spirit is to have the earnest of heaven; the evidence of Sonship being the pledge of the paternal inheritance:—"Now he who stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and *given the earnest of the Spirit* in our hearts:"—"In whom also having believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise; which is *the earnest of our inheritance*, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory."—Are all mankind, as the common partakers of Christ's Spirit, children of God and heirs of glory?

Few things have surprised me more than the use made by Friends of the words of the apostle Paul

in 1 Cor. xii. 7. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." This has been a favourite text with Friends from the beginning till now. Like John i. 9, it has been quoted by all their writers, so far as I am aware, from George Fox to the anonymous author of "Truth Vindicated." By this latter author it is still quoted, with the emphasis of Italics upon *every man*. That "there can be no higher rule than the Scriptures," he affirms, "is not what Christ taught,—is not what the apostles taught,—is not what Fox, and Penn, and Barclay, and Fisher taught:—no—they taught, that Christ was 'the way, the truth, and the life;'—that 'no man cometh unto the Father but by the Son;' nor 'knoweth him but he to whom the Son will reveal him:' they taught, that Christ was "that Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world;" and that 'a manifestation of his blessed Spirit is given to *every man* to profit withal.'*—I have found it very difficult to per-

* Truth Vindicated—Second Edition, page 5. When, in an early part of these Letters, I referred to this Work, the reference was to the First Edition, the second not having then appeared.—I take this opportunity of asking the author, with all seriousness, whether he intended the Preface to the second edition to be an evidence to his readers of his "having received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God?" I cannot bring myself to believe, that Friends in general can approve of the temper of mind in which that Preface is written.

suade myself, that any man, of ordinary understanding, can look at the context in which these words stand, and for one moment retain the conviction, if he had it before, that they have any reference whatsoever to mankind at large. It is no better than empty bluster, to talk about the necessity of taking divine declarations as we find them, and not laying the terms of them under restrictions of our own. We *do* take them as we find them. We *do not* lay them under restrictions of our own. It is an essential and invariably admitted canon of all rational criticism, that universal terms are to be understood as limited by the subject or the persons spoken of. Those, therefore, who insist upon understanding

There was not a little of the same spirit in the work itself. Was it under the influence of elation of mind at the success of his first edition, that in his Preface to the second the author has so far surpassed himself in this "bad eminence?" If he fancies himself entitled, as an inspired man, to use towards ministers and Christians of other denominations, who presume to differ from him, the same style of address that was used to the Scribes and Pharisees by Christ and his forerunner, or to Elymas the sorcerer by the apostle Paul,—he only furnishes an additional exemplification of the melancholy delusiveness of all such pretensions to inspiration. I will not farther characterise the spirit of this production; because I could not apply to it the epithets by which alone it could be truly described, without seeming as if I had imbibed it myself:—which may God's own Spirit ever prevent!—It appears to be a matter of dubiety whether the author be himself A FRIEND,—that is, a member of the Society. I hope he is not. He himself "does not feel at liberty" to resolve the doubt.

“*every man*” as meaning every man *of all mankind*, bring themselves under obligation to show, that it is of all mankind the apostle is at the time speaking. Will any one attempt to show this? Not if he wishes to retain his credit for a sound mind. The limitation is not ours; it is the apostle’s own. He speaks, throughout the chapter, of “the Body of Christ”—that is, of the Church. He speaks of those who “by one Spirit had been all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and had been all made to drink into one Spirit.” Does this description comprehend “the whole world”—the world that “lieth in the wicked one?”—Here, then, is one limitation; and a limitation quite sufficient for our purpose:—for even if “every man” were to be understood of every individual member of the collective body spoken of, it would still be exclusive of all others, and so nothing to the purpose as a proof of the absolute universality of the Spirit’s “manifestation.” But even this latitude of interpretation is wider than the occasion either requires or warrants. It is not of the ordinary saving influences of the Spirit the apostle is speaking;—it is of what he himself denominates “spiritual gifts,”—gifts which, in a sense still higher than the others, were supernatural,—which were, indeed, strictly and properly, miraculous. Now, there is the clearest possible evidence, that these were not possessed by every

individual member even of the collective body to whom the apostle writes. No one can doubt this who reads the chapter. That which the apostle intends to express in this particular verse is, not the *universality* of the “manifestation” of the Spirit, but the *design* for which it was given; and the obvious meaning of his words is neither more nor less than that, in every instance of its bestowment, it was given “to profit withal,”—that is, not for the purpose of self-display or personal aggrandizement, but for the edification of the church, and the advancement of the cause of truth. The sentiment is, not that “the manifestation of the Spirit was given to every man;” but that in the case of every man to whom it was given, it was given for this end.—Nothing in language is more common than this mode of speech. Mr Newton is perfectly right in the example by which he illustrates it:—“The emphasis is on the “words *to profit withal*. If I were to say ‘Riches “are given to every man to use aright,’ I surely “should not be understood to mean that every man “in the world was rich.” Certainly not; but only that every man to whom riches are given has them bestowed upon him for their appropriate uses:—and the mode of expressing the sentiment would be unobjectionably correct. The interpretation put upon the words by Friends in general is one of the most extraordinary instances I have ever met with of sac-

rificing sense to sound,—of wrenching words from the connexion in which they stand, and by which their true import ought to be determined, and affixing to them, in their insulated state, a meaning as foreign as possible to the writer's purpose, but suitable to our own. Aware, however, of the power of custom, as already adverted to, in fastening such interpretations in the mind, I feel it necessary (I certainly should not otherwise) to present you with one or two parallel cases,—cases in which the phrase "*every man*" has a similar limited meaning,—limited, not only to the particular body or community spoken of, but to a specific description of individuals belonging to it.—In the law of the Jubilee, Lev. xxv. 10. you find these words:—"And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return *every man* unto his possession, and ye shall return *every man* unto his family." It would be just as reasonable to interpret the "*every man*" here as meaning every man of the whole human race, as it is to interpret it so in the words of the apostle now under examination:—and yet it not only does not mean this,—it does not even mean every man of all Israel,—but only every man in the circumstances for which the law provided,—every man who was in servitude, every man who had been disinherited, every man

who had been alienated from his kindred. The apostle's words no more signify that "every man" in the world, or every man in the church, had "the manifestation of the Spirit," than these words signify that every man in the world, or every man in Israel, was in one or other of the conditions mentioned.—Take another example from Paul himself. It occurs in 1 Cor. iii. 5—13. "Who, then, is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to *every man* :"—"Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and *every man* shall receive his own reward according to his own labour :"—"According to the grace of God given to me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon :—but let *every man* take heed how he buildeth thereupon :"—"*Every man's* work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it :—and the fire shall try *every man's* work, of what sort it is."—I need not say, that in these verses "every man" neither signifies every man of mankind, nor every man of the Christian church, but only every man of the ministry of that church, and perhaps still more restrictively (at any rate with a speciality of reference to them) every man of those ministers who had been, who were, or who might be, engaged in building up the church at Corinth, of which he had himself laid the foundation.

The author of "Truth Vindicated" affirms the apostolic doctrine to be, that "*a manifestation* of the blessed Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." In so quoting the apostle's words, he does not intentionally *misquote* them, but only writes them in the Quaker form under the power of Quaker habit. The use of the indefinite article—"a manifestation"—renders the statement more loose and general, and brings it more into conformity with Quaker sentiment,—taking off that definiteness of expression which confines the reference to some special mode or modes of the Spirit's influence. The apostle's own words are—"The manifestation of the Spirit;" and he specifies what he means by enumerating the various "spiritual gifts," or supernatural endowments, which then existed in the Christian church,—under designations of which, I doubt not, each would be distinctly understood then, though now, with regard to some of them, we can get no further than more or less plausible conjecture:—"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another diverse kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit dividing to

every man severally as he will." This is "*the* manifestation of the Spirit," as then subsisting, in his various miraculous powers; and the important sentiment is,—a sentiment requiring to be inculcated on the Corinthian church, where a strong tendency had discovered itself to a vain ostentation and abuse of their gifts,—that on whomsoever any one or more of these gifts were bestowed, according to the sovereign pleasure of the divine agent, he who received them was to consider them as conferred for the general good—"to profit withal." But what connexion this has with the notion of every man on earth having "*a* manifestation"—a portion—a measure—of the Holy Spirit,—*I* am unable, and I am not without the hope that *you* too may now be unable, to discern.

5. I have only, then, to observe, in the last place, on John i. 9. that when "the true light which, coming into the world, was in the world" is represented as "lightening every man," the idea which the words are chiefly intended to convey appears to be that of *universality of design*. It is a light for all men; for Gentile as well as for Jew. Christ is "the light of *the world*." There is no appropriation of this light, as there was of the light of revelation before the fullness of time, to any one people, or to any one class or description of mankind. "Every man" is alike welcome to its illuminating, cheering, guiding, purifying influence.—There is another idea which is evi-

dently to be associated with this. It is the idea of *exclusiveness*. It is THE light,—THE TRUE light; designations which are equivalent to its being the ONLY light:—and the meaning is, not that every man without exception is actually enlightened by it, —but that every man who *is* enlightened, has his light from it alone. It is the only true, the only divine source of saving knowledge to men.—I present you with a case which, in the spirit of it at least if not in the letter, is parallel. In Rom. iii. 23, 24. the apostle says—“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” It will not be denied, that when he says “ALL have sinned,” the universality expressed is absolute: —it relates to mankind,—to Jews and Gentiles alike; and admits of no exception. But when the apostle adds—“being justified freely by his grace,” the absolute universality ceases; else it would follow that all men are actually justified. There is an obvious transition from the universality of *fact* to the universality of *design*. The fact is that “all have sinned;” but the corresponding fact is, not that all are justified, but that to all the ground of justification is the same; so that all who *are* justified are justified on that ground. The one is a universality *without exception*; the other a universality *without difference*. “The righteousness of God which is by faith of Je-

sus Christ" is accordingly represented in the preceding verse as "*unto* all," (that is, in the Gospel proclamation and offer) and as "*upon* all them that believe" (that is, to their actual justification and acceptance with God;) there being "no difference"—no difference, as he elsewhere more fully expresses it, "between the Jew and the Greek, the same Lord over all being rich unto all that call upon him." And here, accordingly, on the same principle, he adds—"Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:—seeing it is one God, who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith;—Jew and Gentile in the same way;—on the same ground, and through the same medium;—the one and the other alike "by faith, without the deeds of law."—As the meaning of this passage, then, evidently is, that there is but one method of justification,—that this method is equally adapted and equally designed for Jews and Gentiles,—and that every one who *is* justified is "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;"—so also is the meaning of the other—that Christ is the true and only Light,—that this Light is equally adapted and equally designed for Jews and Gentiles,—and that every man who *is* enlightened—truly and savingly enlightened—is enlightened from this one Light.

I hope you do not anticipate my dwelling upon other passages. If you do, I must disappoint you. I cannot bring myself to argue on the meaning of words and phrases and statements, when that meaning is so palpable that argument can only bewilder. In such cases, there is nothing more troublesome than to frame an argument; and then, the very attempt to frame it unavoidably leads the reader to surmise the existence of difficulty where there is none.—For example, Mr Barclay, after having stated, amongst the points which may be “confidently affirmed and clearly evinced, *according to the testimony of the Holy Scripture*,”—“that God hath given to “every man, whether Jew or Gentile, Turk or Scythian, Indian or Barbarian, of whatsoever nation, “country, or place, a certain day or time of visitation; during which day or time it is possible for “them to be saved, and to partake of the fruit of “Christ’s death,”—proceeds thus:—“Secondly, That “for this end God hath communicated and given unto “every man a measure of the light of his own Son, “a measure of grace, or a measure of the Spirit, “which the Scripture expresses by several names, “as sometimes the seed of the kingdom, Math. xiii. “18, 19. the light that makes all things manifest, “Eph. v. 13. the word of God, Rom. x. 17. or “manifestation of the Spirit given to every man to “profit withal, 1 Cor. xii. 7. a talent, Math. xxv. 15.

“a little leaven, Math. xiii. 33. the gospel preached “in every creature, Col. i. 23.”*—Now I have already adverted, at greater length than they were entitled to, to the interpretations put upon one or two of the passages where these expressions are used. But you must dispense with my setting about a formal proof, that the seed or word of the kingdom, the light that makes all things manifest, the word of God, the talent, the little leaven, in the places where they respectively occur, do *not* represent the “inward light.” I should account this absolute trifling. The simple reading of each of the passages ought to be sufficient for the repudiation of a commentary so outrageously arbitrary; a commentary which can find a sanction in your minds only from those associations which custom has connected with a peculiar phraseology,—a phraseology, it is to be feared, originating in the exigencies of a mystical and extravagant system, with which Scripture could not be brought into the appearance of harmony otherwise than by the perversion of its simplest language. You may think this severe. It is so. But I cannot help it. I do not pronounce the perversion *wilful*, in the sense of giving a different meaning *in the book* from that which, at the time, exists *in the mind*. What I mean is, that, a principle being once adopted, and

* Apology, page 132.

obtaining favour and fixture in the mind, there is a natural and powerful tendency to interpret Scripture according to it; to find it in many a place, where something else had always been found before; and, if the principle should have aught in it of mysticism, to attach its mystic import to many a term and many a phrase, which had never before suggested any thing but what was obvious and simple. It is thus that the *light*, the *seed*, the *grace*, the *word*, the *Christ*, the *leaven*, the *talent*, and various other terms, have come to possess, in the lips and in the minds of Friends, by the power of association, a meaning so different from that which they bear in the common vocabulary of Christians; and the force of attachment to the principle from which this peculiarity of language arises, has many a time imparted to the veriest conceits of criticism, and crudities of interpretation, the aspect of ingenious originality and profound wisdom. I have thought, and thought again, on the passages above referred to, and others of a similar character, and have come to the deliberate conviction that the best way to dispose of them is, to leave them to your own judgment. Read them; read them carefully and candidly; read them without either Barclay's spectacles or mine; read them only with minds divested of prepossession and prejudice, and simply desiring an answer to the question What is truth?—and I am persuaded that you will

find no difficulty. Instead of the *inward light*, in any of its visionary and varying aspects, you will discover in them what is definite, substantial, and ever the same,—“the gospel of Jesus Christ,”—the word *preached* by Himself and his apostles,—the word *heard* by men of all characters and all conditions,—the various treatment experienced by it,—the various effects, in different characters, produced by it,—its gradual diffusion from a small and limited commencement,—its divine adaptation to the exigencies of all mankind,—the welcome which it holds out to all to receive its blessings,—its complete and permanent establishment, and final results.

I must draw this letter to a close by remarking, what appears to be too obvious to need remark, but what, notwithstanding, has marvellously escaped the discernment of Barclay,—the distinction between the *object of faith* and *faith itself*. Barclay writes as if he held that faith itself cannot be internal, unless the object of it be internal. He charges all who believe in an external Christ, as “confiding in an external barren faith;” and, in the plenitude of his charity, vilifies the *Calvinists* as desiring to have “a Christ “to save them without any trouble, to destroy all “their enemies for them without them, and nothing “or little within, and in the meanwhile to be at ease “to live in their sins secure!”—and he imputes the rejection of his “inward light” to the same cause

with that to which Christ authoritatively ascribes the rejection of himself and of the light of his doctrine :—"When all is well examined," says he, "the cause is plain; it is *because their deeds are evil*, "that with one consent they reject this light."—It must surely, however, be manifest to you, that an *external faith* is a contradiction in terms. Christ may be outward; the cross of Christ outward; but faith in Christ, faith in the cross of Christ, can be nowhere else than in the mind and heart. And because my faith regards an object that is extraneous to my own mind, it does not follow that it must be "barren," any more than that it is external. So far from its giving us ease in sin, and security amidst unsubdued enemies and lusts, it is the inward principle of an inward salvation,—a salvation from corrupt affections and desires, and from the love of this present world :—it is the victory by which the world is overcome;—it purifies the heart; it works by love, —by love to God, love to Christ, love to Christians, love to mankind. He who fancies he has the faith of the gospel, while his professed faith is not thus operative, "deceiveth himself, and the truth is not in him." The faith which we profess is, from the nature of its object, eminently fitted to produce such effects. It is the faith of the love of God who "spared not his own Son but freely gave him up for us all :"—it is the faith of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who, though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich :”—it is the faith of “ the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.” Believing this, we feel the full force of the appeals, addressed to the gratitude of the renewed heart—“ I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your persons a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service :”—“ Ye are not your own ; for ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God, in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s :”—“ the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ;—and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again.”—But according to Barclay, not only is faith itself in us, but the object of it is in us ;—and in us not merely *after* we have believed,—in the sense formerly adverted to, of its “ dwelling in our hearts *by faith*,” the object of principles and affections that are in us,—but in us *previously* to our believing,—in all men, whether they believe or not. The Christ on whom sinners are, by the gospel, called to believe, is, according to him, a Christ already in them. This is the doctrine in the promulgation of which in his own day he glories, as the grand peculiarity of Quakerism, and the only saving truth.

“From a sense of the blindness and ignorance that
 “have come over Christendom it is, that we are led
 “and moved of the Lord” (such is his confident
 language) “so constantly and frequently to call all,
 “invite all, request all, to turn to the light *in* them,
 “to mind the light *in* them, to believe in Christ as
 “he is *in* them: and that in the name, power and
 “authority of the Lord,”—(is it an apostle that speaks?)
 “—not in school-arguments and distinctions, we do
 “charge and command them to lay aside their wis-
 “dom, to come down out of that proud, airy, brain-
 “knowledge, and to stop that mouth, how eloquent
 “soever to the worldly ear it may appear, and to be
 “silent, and sit down as in the dust, and to mind
 “*the light of Christ in their own consciences*,”—&c.
 &c.—And was it, then, “proud, airy, brain-know-
 ledge” which Paul had, when he said, “Yea, doubt-
 “less, and I count all things but loss for the excel-
 “lency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:
 “for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and
 “do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,
 “and be found in him, not having mine own right-
 “eousness which is of the law, but that which is by
 “the faith of Christ, even the righteousness which is
 “of God by faith?”—Who was “Christ Jesus his
 Lord,” the knowledge of whom he thus prized as
 above all price? Was it not the “Jesus of Nazareth
 whom he had persecuted?”—was it not the Jesus to

whom the martyred Stephen,—when “Saul consented unto his death,” “gave his voice against him, and kept the raiment of them that slew him,”—had borne his testimony as “standing at the right hand of God?”—For whom was it that he “suffered the loss of all things?” Was it not for that Jesus who had said “I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name’s sake?”—Who was the Christ, in whose righteousness he desired to be found?—Was it not He who, at the time predicted by the prophet, appeared on earth, “to finish the transgression, and to make an end of offerings for sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,”—whose prophetic designation was “Jehovah our righteousness,”—and whom “God made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him?”—And was not this the Jesus—this the Christ—this the Saviour—this the Lord whom he preached to others?—preached, not with a “proud, airy, brain-knowledge,” but with a knowledge that made him feel himself “less than the least of all saints?”—preached, “not with wisdom of words,” not with the artificial rhetoric of Greek or Roman schools, yet with all the eloquence of lips that were touched with the fire of God’s altar? Would Mr Barclay have “stopped *that* mouth?” And yet it was to an *outward Christ* it bore its testimony;—even to that

Christ who was “made of a woman, made under the law,” who died on Calvary, and who lives, and pleads, and reigns in heaven. Point me to one text in which this apostle directs unbelieving sinners to an inward Christ,—in which he speaks of Christ as being *in* any except believers. There is no such text. This apostle, like all the rest, delivered his testimony, presented the evidences of its truth, and called on sinners to believe it:—and when it was believed, then Christ was “*in* those who believed it the hope of glory:”—he “dwelt in their hearts by faith:” they trusted in him, they loved him, they followed him: having “received Christ Jesus the Lord, they walked in him.”

“Glory to God for ever!” exults this extraordinary man, in terms worthy of a better cause, “who
 “hath chosen us as first-fruits to himself in this day,
 “wherein he is arisen to plead with the nations, and
 “therefore hath sent us forth to preach this everlasting Gospel unto all, Christ nigh to all, the light in
 “all, the seed sown in the hearts of all, that men
 “may come and apply their minds to it. And we
 “rejoice that we have been made to lay down our
 “wisdom and learning (such of us as have had some
 “of it) and our carnal reasoning, to learn of Jesus;
 “and sit down at the feet of Jesus in our hearts, and
 “hear him, who there makes all things manifest, and

“reproves all things by his light, Eph. v. 13.”*—Where is there any thing akin to this in the writings of the apostles? Where, in these writings, are sinners called upon to come and learn “the everlasting gospel” by “applying their minds” to a light already in them? Where are they taught to “sit down at the feet of a Jesus *in their hearts*,” and thus to receive saving instruction, not from God’s word, but from within themselves? What is this Christ within—this light within—this seed within—which “reproves all things, and makes all things manifest?” What is the amount of knowledge, which, yourselves being judges, when the “swelling words” used in its eulogy are set aside, is actually derived from this “inward light”—this Jesus in the heart—this divine teacher, that preaches *in every creature*?—What does it teach—what does it preach? In the terms of your own committee, in their dealings with the author of the Beacon, it is “*the light by which the law of God is in measure made known to all men.*”†—This is all. Barclay makes no more of it than your committee does. Their language accords with that of all your accredited writers. This is what Barclay makes of the “grain of mustard-seed,” Math. xiii. 31, 32. which, says he, “though it be

* Apology, page 179.

† Correspondence between the Committee of the Yearly Meeting of Friends, and Isaac Crewdson, &c. page 27.

“small in its appearance, and that it be hid in the
 “earthly part of man’s heart; yet therein is life and
 “salvation towards the sons of men wrapped up,
 “which comes to be revealed as they give way to
 “it.” And, in terms as extraordinary as any in his
 book (and that is saying not a little) he proceeds
 thus to set forth the wonders of this “least of all
 seeds:”—“And in this seed, in the hearts of all
 “men, is the kingdom of God, as in capacity to be
 “produced, or rather exhibited according as it receives
 “depth, is nourished, and not choked. Hence Christ
 “saith, that the kingdom of God was in the very Pha-
 “risees, Luke xvii. 20, 21. who did oppose and resist
 “him, and were justly accounted as ‘serpents, and a
 “generation of vipers.’ Now the kingdom of God
 “could be no otherways in them than in a *seed*, even
 “as the thirty-fold and the hundred-fold is wrapt up
 “in a small seed, lying in a barren ground, which
 “springs not forth because it wants nourishment;
 “and as the whole body of a great tree is wrapt up
 “potentially in the seed of the tree, and so is brought
 “forth in due season; and as the capacity of a man
 “or woman is not only in a child, but even in the
 “very embryo; even so the kingdom of Jesus Christ,
 “yea Jesus Christ himself, Christ within who is the
 “hope of glory, and becometh wisdom, righteous-
 “ness, sanctification, and redemption, is in every
 “man’s and woman’s heart, in that little incorrupti-

“ble seed, ready to be brought forth as it is cherished and received in the love of it. For there can be no men worse than those rebellious and unbelieving Pharisees were; and yet this kingdom was thus within them, and they were directed to look for it there; so, it is neither ‘lo here’ nor ‘lo there,’ in this or the other observation, that this is known, but as this seed of God in the heart is minded and entertained.”*

I have called this a wonderful little seed. Is it not so? It is that “by which the law of God is in measure made known unto all men;”—that is, from which those who are destitute of divine revelation derive the little knowledge they manifest of the difference between right and wrong, between good and evil. And yet in this little seed, this least of all seeds, there lie, potentially enfolded, all the mysteries of the kingdom of God; the everlasting Gospel in all its truths and blessings; wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; Jesus Christ himself, and the hope of glory!—so that the most ignorant heathen, and the very worst of human beings, has only to “mind and entertain this seed of God in his heart”—has only to attend to this light in his own mind—has only to “sit down at the feet of this Christ within him,”—and all is his:—if he only

* Apol. pages 176, 177.

“cherishes” this little seed, “hid in the earthly part of his heart,” it will germinate, and unfold itself to all the fulness of evangelical knowledge, holiness, and blessing! All the mysteries of the gospel kingdom are wrapped up in this sense of right and wrong,—this measure of the knowledge of God’s law!—Now, *do* you believe this? *can* you believe this? To me it appears as strange a mystery in the world of mind, as the doctrine of transubstantiation in the world of matter. Granting that, in nature, the seed contains in its germ the miniature of the future tree,—and that whatever is subsequently evolved was thus previously in the seed,—yet surely no seed can ever evolve that which it does *not* contain. How, then, can there ever be unfolded, from a seed that contains no more than “a measure of the knowledge of God’s law,” all the discoveries and all the effects of the Gospel? May you not as reasonably believe the body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ to be contained in the consecrated wafer?

When Jesus says to the Pharisees, who asked him “when the kingdom of God should come”—“behold the kingdom of God is within you;” the context shows that his object is to set before them the true nature of that kingdom, as a *spiritual* kingdom;—a kingdom, not such as they, in common with their countrymen in general, were expecting, but one which had to do with human hearts,—subduing

them to God, bringing them into willing and holy subjection;—a kingdom, of which the principles, and influences, and blessings, were specially internal. In the words used by him, therefore, he is not to be understood as stating a fact respecting *the Pharisees*, but as stating a fact respecting *his kingdom*. He tells them, that, while they were looking for something outward,—something “coming with observation,”—that is, with external power and show,—they were looking for that which they should never find; that all who found his kingdom should find it within them; that if they themselves found it, it must be *there*,—in the power of its gracious principles in their hearts.—I have no wish to rid myself of any difficulty by rendering the words as some do, “behold the kingdom of God is *among* you.” I hold by our authorized version as the true one. But nothing can be more extravagant, than either to identify, as Barclay does, the sense of right and wrong possessed by the heathen, (howsoever communicated) with the discoveries and principles of the New Testament kingdom, as revealed by Christ and his apostles;—or to insist upon it that that kingdom, wrapt up in its embryo seed, was actually at the time in the hearts of those who are elsewhere likened to “whited sepulchres, beautiful outwardly, but within full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness,”—in hearts that were

“full of hypocrisy and iniquity,” of “extortion and excess!”

The “SEED,” of which our Lord so frequently makes figurative use, is “the word of the kingdom,” Math. xiii. 19. called in the parallel passage of Luke’s gospel, “the word of God,” Luke viii. 11. and, in the gospel by Mark, simply “the word,” Mark iv. 14. “The sower soweth the word.”—This seed was sown in the preaching of Christ himself, and of his apostles and other ministers;—and it is still sown, in the preaching of all who publish the same truths. It found of old, and it still finds, various soils, and presents various results:—like seed, in the natural world, either taking no root at all, as on the trodden foot-path; springing up with hasty but feeble and inefficient growth, and scorched immediately before the sun,—as on the thinly covered rock; presenting a fairer promise, but choked and rendered fruitless by the rankly-springing thorns; or, in the good ground, growing up, and bearing fruit, thirty, sixty, an hundred fold:—the first case representing those from whose minds “the wicked one” catches away the word, the instant it has found admission;—the second, those whose inconsiderate profession, superficial and rootless, gives way at the first approach of difficulty and trial;—the third, such as set out well, but become the victims of “the cares of this life, the deceitfulness

of riches, and the lusts of other things ;”—and the fourth the genuine subjects of the kingdom, in whose “good and honest hearts,” rendered such by the influence of the Divine Spirit, the word is retained, and fruit is brought forth with patience.—All this is simple and intelligible. The mystic little “seed,” which exists, independently of the written or preached word, “in every man’s and woman’s heart,” and which requires only to be “cherished,”—though with what kind of culture it is not easy to tell,—in order to bring out of it all the fulness of the Gospel,—is as far as possible from being so :—and I know not any one thing that has given occasion to a larger amount of the misappropriation and perversion of Scripture terms and Scripture figures, than this “seed,”—this “light”—this “Christ within ;”—nor can I refer you to a more satisfactory exemplification of the truth of this, than to Barclay himself.

In my next and last letter, I mean to consider the sentiments of Mr Gurney on “the perceptible influence and guidance of the Spirit of Truth,” along with some of their practical bearings.

Meantime, believe me again,

Yours respectfully,

R. W.

LETTER VIII.

“ON THE PERCEPTIBLE INFLUENCE AND GUIDANCE
OF THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH.”

RESPECTED FRIENDS,

“THE yearly committee,” in their statement of objections to the Beacon, declare their conviction, which I may presume, therefore, to be that of the Quaker body generally, that “the doctrine of the inward light is absolutely identical with the doctrine of the Spirit.”—I was glad to find, from this authorized statement, that I had not gone too far, in the outset of these letters, when I pronounced the “inward light” to be the very vital principle of Quakerism; and it has been under this conviction, that I have allotted to it so large a proportion of my strictures. At the same time, although the denial of the “inward light” might fairly be regarded as a denial of the doctrine of the Spirit in the sense in which that doctrine is held by Friends; yet there are different departments of the same doctrine, and different views under which it may be contemplated and discussed. All mankind, according to the Friends,

have “a portion of the light of the Spirit of Christ;” and they have this, as the result of Christ’s mediation. Now, it may be one question, how far this universal possession of the Spirit is capable of being maintained; and another question, how far, when the Spirit is possessed, his guidance and influence are direct and perceptible. The latter position, indeed, would appear hardly to admit of question, in those cases where there exists no external revelation, as the rule by which, when it is enjoyed, the Spirit may be supposed to impart his directions:—for, the *light of nature*, as usually understood, being by the Friends denied,—unless the influence and guidance of the Spirit, in the measure in which it is possessed, were direct and perceptible, it would, in such cases, amount to absolutely nothing. But the question still remains, how far the influence and guidance of the Spirit are direct and perceptible, in the case of those who are in actual possession of the written word;—that is, as a little explanation will show, how far they are *independent of that word*.—It is to Mr Gurney’s views on this question, with some of its practical bearings, that I now solicit your attention: and in discussing these, I take for my text-book the “OBSERVATIONS” of that esteemed author, of which the *third chapter* is exclusively appropriated to this subject.

Having already considered, at great length, the

doctrine of the Friends respecting "immediate revelation,"—and having, on one occasion, alluded to the title of this letter,—(which is the same as the title of the chapter in Mr Gurney's work just referred to)—as only a modified form of designation for the same doctrine, I may seem to you as if I were about to retrace the ground I have already traversed. And so, to a certain extent, I am. I hinted, however, the possibility, when discussing Barclay's representations of this Quaker principle, that I might bring them into comparison with those of Mr Gurney. I now follow out this hint; not, indeed, for the purpose of tracing, directly, either a parallelism or a contrast between the one and the other; but for the sake of showing that even Mr Gurney's modified statements are such as cannot be maintained in consistency either with the Scriptures or with themselves;—and still more, for the sake of presenting what appears to me to be the truth on this fundamental point in a clearer and more direct light than has yet, in these letters, been done, as well as of pointing out the pernicious tendency of the doctrine of "perceptible guidance" in some of its more obvious and avowed practical results. I foresee a little repetition here and there of sentiments already advanced in a different form, which connexion may render unavoidable, and which must find its vindication in the paramount importance of the subject,—a subject which

may fairly be regarded as the hinge on which the whole system of Quakerism turns; this “perceptible influence and guidance of the Spirit of truth” being not only pleaded for as the direct and ever-present rule of personal conduct, but appealed to in support of some modes of divine worship and in opposition to others, and invested with judicial authority in deciding controversies respecting Christian ordinances, —controversies which, in the apprehension of Christians generally, can receive no satisfactory settlement but in an answer to the question “What saith the Scripture?”

In introducing this subject to the attention of his readers, Mr Gurney, in accordance with what has just been said, speaks of it as “an important doctrine of religion, which, although by no means peculiar to Friends, is certainly promulgated among them with remarkable earnestness, and which lies at the root of all their particular views and practices.”*

“The differences of sentiment which exist in the church on this great subject,” he continues, “have respect, not to the question whether the Spirit does or does not operate on the heart of man (for on this question all true Christians are agreed;) but principally, if not entirely, to the *mode* in which that Spirit

* Observations, &c. page 74. close of Chap. 2.

“operates.”—And he then proceeds to state the amount of the difference between other Christians and those of his own communion, in the following terms:—“On this point there appears to exist, “among the professors of Christianity, and even “among serious Christians, a considerable diversity “of opinion. Some persons conceive that the Spirit “of God does not influence the heart of man *directly*, “but only through the means of certain appointed “instruments; such as, the Holy Scriptures, and the “word preached. Many others, who allow the direct and independent influences of the Spirit, and “deem them absolutely essential to the formation of “the Christian character, refuse to admit that they “are perceptible to the mind; but consider them to “be hidden in their actions, and revealed only in “their fruits. Now with Friends (and probably with “many persons under other names) it is a leading “principle in religion, that the work of the Holy “Spirit in the soul is not only immediate and direct, “but perceptible. *We believe, that we are all furnished with an inward Guide or Monitor, who “makes his voice known to us, and who, if faithfully “obeyed and closely followed, will infallibly conduct “us into true virtue and happiness, because he leads “us into a real conformity with the will of God.”**

* Ibid. pages 75, 76.

I have marked this last sentence in *Italics*, because I am desirous that the statement contained in it should be specially noted. It is Mr Gurney's explanation of what he wishes to be understood as meaning by the "perceptible influence and guidance of the Spirit of Truth."—Let it be observed, then—

In the *first* place, that such a statement goes far to a setting aside of the Scriptures as the Christian's rule and guide, or at least of the *necessity* of their counsel and direction. It seems as if it brought against the divine word a charge of *felo de se*,—adducing it in evidence of its authoritatively setting aside itself. Regarding the sentence as expressing the amount of the privilege of "perceptible influence and guidance" conceived by Mr Gurney to be enjoyed by New Testament believers, I take it in connexion with what he says, page 89. "That the perceptible influence of the Spirit on the soul proceeds from God, the Christian enjoys satisfactory evidence—*first, in the declarations of Scripture that such an influence shall be bestowed upon him*—and secondly, in the practical results into which it leads."—Of the latter branch of evidence I may speak again. It is to the former I at present refer. According to Mr Gurney, then, the Scriptures assure believers, that they are "all furnished with an inward Guide or Monitor, who makes his voice known to them, and who, if faithfully obeyed and closely followed, will infal-

“libly conduct them into true virtue and happiness, “because he leads them into a real conformity with “the will of God.”—Now, my question is, am I to understand this as meaning that the Scriptures, on the part of their Divine Author, promise a guidance that is *independent of themselves*? Is it thus independent, or is it not? If it be, then to what purpose the multiplied directions and admonitions of that blessed Book, as to principles, affections, desires, actions, and words? Why lay down so many laws, and urge an unceasing remembrance of them and attention to their prescriptions and prohibitions, and at the same time assure us of an inward guide by which laws are rendered needless,—a guide “infallibly conducting into virtue and happiness” all by whom it is “faithfully obeyed and closely followed?”—When Mr Gurney says of this Guide—“he leads us into a real conformity with the will of God,”—either he means the will of God abstractly, that is, simply as existing in the divine mind,—or he means the will of God *as contained in the Scriptures*. If he means the former, then the consequence just stated clearly follows; that, namely, of the Scriptures, according to him, disowning their own necessity to the guidance of God’s people. If he means the latter, then the Scriptures, after all, are the rule—the fundamental and primary rule; for such a rule that must assuredly be, into conformity with which it is the

design and effect of the Spirit's agency to bring us. That which brings us into this conformity can never itself be the rule or canon.—A friend (let me suppose) who is familiarly and correctly versant in the law of the land, undertakes to be my director; and I surrender myself implicitly to his guidance, having a perfect confidence that he will, in no point, lead me astray. This friend does not, in these circumstances, become himself the primary rule. It is the Law that still holds this place, into conformity with which his directions bring me. It is not difficult, however, to perceive, that, in proportion to the measure of implicit faith with which I give myself up to the counsels of such a guide, will become my indifference about investigating the law, and obtaining an acquaintance with it, for myself. The same must be the tendency of the sentiment in regard to the study of the Holy Scriptures. If the Spirit dwelling in us is an independent Guide, we have but slender inducements to study with assiduity a rule, of which, with the higher and more immediate direction of an infallible Monitor within, we cease to feel the necessity.—It is for the excellent author on whose words I am commenting, to consider, how far the view he thus gives of the Spirit's "perceptible guidance" is in harmony with the sentiments he elsewhere expresses respecting the paramount authority of the Holy Scriptures.

Secondly: The "perceptible influence" of the

Spirit is not illustrated by Mr Gurney as relating to the *discovery of truth*, but exclusively, or almost exclusively, as relating to the *direction of the life*. Hence, when the Spirit—the Spirit of Christ of which “a measure is bestowed upon all mankind”—is spoken of as “Light,” and as “making manifest,”—what is it, according to Mr Gurney, that it *does* make manifest? “Since, then, the Spirit of Christ, “appearing in the soul of man, is light, it is plain “that this Spirit makes manifest—communicates an “actual moral sense—teaches what is right and what “is wrong, in a perceptible or intelligible manner.”—The illustration of this general position immediately subjoined shows that this is the kind of guidance which he considers the indwelling Monitor as affording especially to the children of God:—“Thus “the psalmist prayed as follows: ‘O send out thy “light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them “bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles.’ “The light and the truth for which he thus offered up “his petitions, could not be the written law, of which “he was already in possession—the expressions are “rather to be understood of the light of God’s coun- “tenance and the truth revealed by his Spirit: and “these, according to the views of the psalmist, were “at once perceptible and powerful; for they were “to *lead* him in the way of righteousness, and to

“*bring him to the holy hill and tabernacles of God.*”*

—I shall not inquire, whether David, when he prays for the “sending forth of God’s light and truth,” had reference to that immediate divine inspiration, of which, amongst those “holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,” his psalms show him to have been so eminent a partaker:—nor whether there was any allusion to those supernatural ways in which the divine mind was then, not unfrequently, indicated, and to which David, we know, on various occasions, had recourse; such, for example, as the Urim and Thummim.—Setting these apart, I have only to ask, ought not the language of David on one occasion to be taken in connexion with his language on other occasions, and each to be interpreted in consistency with the other? Now to any who are familiar with the divine compositions of the “sweet singer of Israel,” I need not say, with what frequency he speaks of *God’s word*, under a variety of appropriate designations, as the chosen and constant rule of his conduct, and guide of his life: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee:”—“Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors:”—“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path:”—“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul:

* Observations, &c. page 77.

the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward.”*—When we find the psalmist speaking in such terms of the divine word, are we warranted in considering him, when he prays for God’s light and truth to lead and guide him, as praying for a guidance *independent of that word*? Ought we not rather to interpret him consistently with himself, and understand the prayer as comprehensive of both?—as imploring such an illumination of his mind by God’s Spirit as should impart a clear apprehension of God’s truth,—an apprehension which might at once cheer his heart and direct his steps? And may not the terms “thy LIGHT and thy TRUTH,” taken distinctively yet unitedly, be designed to express the very combination for which I contend?

The explanation of the Spirit’s “perceptible influence and guidance” as having a more immediate reference to *duty* than to *knowledge*, accords with the representation of the same matter given by William Penn, as quoted formerly, pages 116, 117.—

* Ps. cxix. 11, 24, 105; xix. 7—11.

Yet it does not appear that Mr Gurney intends his language to be interpreted thus restrictively. For, in common with other Friends, he applies to all Christians the promises, given by Christ to his apostles, of the Spirit to “bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever he had said unto them,” and to “guide them into all truth.” I marvel at this. I do not marvel that common minds should satisfy themselves with a vague and indiscriminate use of terms; but I do marvel, that a mind of such perspicacity and candour as Mr Gurney’s should not better “discern things that differ.” If the passages referred to really contain a promise to all believers equally with the apostles, does it not follow that all believers have their knowledge of divine truth in the same way in which the apostles had theirs?—and not only in the same way, but to the same extent, and in the same perfection?—that they have it directly from the Spirit, and independently of written revelation?—But I must not resume the discussion of texts which have already been under review. See pages 85—93.—For the same reason, I must refrain from dwelling on 1 John ii. 20, 27, on which too Mr Gurney, like other Friends, lays much stress;—representing it as expressing the fulfilment, in the experience of believers generally, of the promises to the twelve apostles just referred to. I would appeal to Mr Gurney’s candid judgment,—in addition

to what has been already said upon the passage in pages 63—66,—whether the “knowledge of all things” which is connected with the “unction from the Holy One” does not relate to the spiritual discernment of what had been communicated to them by inspired men commissioned and accredited for this work? Besides the evidence of this formerly adduced, I would point him to verses 20—24; and especially to the last of these verses—“Let that therefore abide in you *which ye have heard from the beginning*: if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” Their having “heard it from the beginning” clearly refers to the delivery of the message of the gospel to them by its inspired ambassadors: compare chap. i. 1—5. Was not “the anointing,” then, which “abode in them,” and “taught them of all things, and was truth and no lie,” that unction of the Holy Spirit by which there was imparted to their minds, with increasing clearness and fulness, the spiritual discernment of the excellence, and glory, and harmony, and divinity of all “those truths which were most surely believed among them?”—I readily grant that “they were not any longer to *“depend on the teaching of their fellow-creatures:”*—but I deny that this can be understood as inclusive of the apostles. I deny it for two reasons:—in the first place, for one formerly assigned, that such

an interpretation would be inconsistent with the very act in which John was at the time engaged,—the act of teaching them. If they “needed not that any man should teach them”—in consequence of their having the knowledge of “all things” directly from the Spirit of God to themselves,—then why does *he* teach them?—And, secondly, for this additional reason, that the teaching of the apostles was not *human* teaching, but *divine*. John himself accordingly, in the same Epistle (chap. iv. 6.) says, “We are of God:—he that knoweth God *heareth us*; he that is not of God *heareth not us*. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” The evidence of their “knowing God,” then, was, not their hearing themselves,—that is, hearing the Spirit in themselves,—but their hearing the apostles:—because, Jesus having said of them—“He that *heareth you* *heareth me*; and he that *heareth me* *heareth Him* that sent me,”—hearing them was hearing Christ and hearing the Father,—and *depending* on them was not depending on “fellow-creatures,” but on God.—All this is in fine harmony with the language of our Lord in his intercessory prayer—John xvii. 20. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me *through their word*.” It will not be questioned, I presume, that this prayer included all believers to the end of time. The testimony of the apostles, though not now uttered by

their lips, is still on record in their writings; and to this hour it is “through their word” that sinners believe. “Their word” contains the divine information,—the truth to be believed; and “their word,” read in the record, or preached by the lips of others, is the instrumental means of saving illumination and conversion,—while the Holy Spirit is the efficient agent in opening the understanding to see it in its real excellence, and the heart to receive it in the love of it.

Jesus says of his followers, using the favourite and delightful image of the Shepherd and his Flock—“My sheep *hear my voice*, and I know them, and they follow me:”—“and other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and *they shall hear my voice*, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.”—On these expressions Mr Gurney offers the following comment—“The disciples of “Jesus, who were gathered to him during his short “abode upon the earth, undoubtedly enjoyed the “privilege of being instructed by his outward voice; “but the voice of Christ which was afterwards to be “heard by his sheep, who were not of the Jewish “fold, and which is still heard by his faithful fol- “lowers, whom he ‘leads in the way of righteous- “ness,’ we may conclude to be the voice of his Spirit, “—a voice inwardly communicated to the soul of

“man.”*—But why should we not “conclude” this voice to be the voice of Christ *in his word*? Is not the true import of “hearing Christ’s voice,” *obeying Christ’s word*? We are not, surely, destitute of his word, merely because we have lost his living voice. In the word of inspired truth, *his voice* speaks to us, and shall continue to speak, with divine authority, till the end of time. All who believe and obey that word “hear Christ’s voice;” *hearing*, to every person acquainted with the phraseology of Scripture, being familiarly synonymous with *obeying*. When the “voice from the excellent glory,” which pronounced Jesus God’s “beloved Son in whom He was well-pleased,” added the command “HEAR HIM,” the spirit of the command evidently was—Submit to his divinely recognised authority; believe his word, and do his will. His word is in the Scriptures; his will is in the Scriptures. The dictates of his Spirit are there. And to “HEAR HIM” is to believe as truth what is there revealed, and to practise as duty what is there commanded.

Thirdly: While Mr Gurney affirms, respecting the “perceptible guidance of the Spirit” for which he pleads, that “if faithfully obeyed and closely followed, it will infallibly conduct us into true virtue and happiness, leading us into a real conformity

* Observations, &c. pages 79, 80.

“ with the will of God,” he at the same time admits
 to so great an extent the liableness of its professed
 possessors to illusion, as almost to annihilate its value
 by the doubt which it brings upon the question of its
 reality : “ While it may be hoped,” says he, “ that
 “ the spiritually-minded Christian will readily admit
 “ the force of these scriptural evidences, and will
 “ cheerfully embrace that profitable truth which they
 “ so clearly unfold ; it is not to be forgotten that the
 “ human imagination is *very active and delusive*, and
 “ that persons who are superficial in religion, or who
 “ are not sufficiently watchful, may sometimes mis-
 “ take the unauthorized dictates of their own minds
 “ for the voice of a divine and unerring guide. That
 “ errors of this description have on many occasions
 “ occurred, must be freely allowed ; and that, under
 “ particular circumstances, they may probably con-
 “ tinue to occur, will not be denied by those who
 “ are sufficiently aware of the infirmity and deceit-
 “ fulness of the heart of man. It appears, therefore,
 “ on the one hand, that the inward illumination of
 “ the Spirit of God is mercifully bestowed on us as
 “ a perceptible guide to righteousness, and, on the
 “ other hand, that we are exceedingly liable to be
 “ led about by the dictates of our own imagination.
 “ Such a view of the subject naturally leads us to
 “ inquire, by what characteristics the voice of the
 “ Lord’s Spirit and that of the human imagination,

“in matters of religion, may be distinguished from “each other.”*—This is strong language. The human imagination is pronounced, with the emphasis of Italics, “*very active and delusive* ;” and the terms “sometimes,” “many occasions,” “exceedingly liable,” &c. rise above each other, as if the consciousness of the risk of deception had magnified in the mind of the writer as he proceeded. But the language, though strong, is not *too* strong. There are few things, if any, that involve more numerous or more powerful tendencies to self-deception.—It must be obvious, even to the least considerate, that the present question relates not at all to the infallibility of the guidance when really possessed ; for, once admit the guidance to be that of the Spirit of God, and to doubt its being infallible becomes impiety. To grant it divine, is to grant it unerring. But I have formerly had occasion to expose the strange oversight of Mr Barclay, in confounding two things so palpably distinct as *the truth of what God reveals* and *the reality of the revelation*—pages 101—107. That “the true and undoubted revelation of God’s Spirit is certain and infallible,” is, as I have there shown, (or rather, I should say, *stated*—for to *show* it would be to demonstrate a truism) a proposition of no relevancy in the present controversy.

* Observations, &c. page 82.

The sole question relates to the reality of the revelation ;—and this, Mr Barclay admits, “ may be called in question.” To assert the infallibility of the revelation when possessed, is to assert what is nothing to the purpose, so long as it is, at the same time, granted, that those who profess to have it may be mistaken. The observations then made are applicable, in their full spirit and force, to the representations of Mr Gurney. Of what avail is it, to know that the Guide himself is infallible, when there is so much of fallibility as to the possession of his guidance? In the written word, we have the recorded mind of the Spirit. A clear apprehension, and a full and ready acquaintance with this word, it is the duty of every Christian to seek ; and, while he endeavours to follow its dictates, to look for divine influence to preserve him from every perverting bias. But *perceptible guidance*, if it be any thing at all that is peculiar to Quakerism, is guidance *independent of the word* ; the terms being only a gentler and more modified expression of what the old fathers of the system were wont to claim, as the privilege of New Covenant believers, under the more unqualified title of *immediate revelation*. The question, therefore, comes to be,—if, in the subject himself of the supposed influence, there exist so many tendencies to self-deception, how is the reality to be determined? Mr Gurney answers this question, and endeavours

to meet the difficulty which it involves, by a description of the two influences—the genuine and the counterfeit—according to certain differential qualities by which they are to be distinguished. He first does this in general terms, and then more in detail. “The least reflection,” he observes, “may serve to convince us, that the two influences of which I have spoken, the true guide and the false guide, are in reality absolutely distinct, different, and sometimes even opposite. The true guide is ‘the day-spring from on high,’ and comes immediately from God, in whom there is no mixture of evil, and who is the original and unfailing source of all good. The false guide is the creature of human infirmity and misapprehension; and frequently the source from which it arises is positively evil and corrupt. Those who are faithfully following the true guide are the dedicated children of a holy God. Those who are following only the false guide, have constructed for themselves an *unsound* religion, and are mere enthusiasts.—As the voice of the true shepherd and the voice of the stranger are thus really distinct, and, in fact, opposed to one another; so, I believe, the sincere and humble Christian, who has been taught the lesson of waiting upon God, and whose religion is of no shallow character, will be enabled, by divine grace, to discern the one from the other. He will

“find that they are clearly distinguished; first, by
 “the mode of their operation; and secondly, by the
 “fruits which they produce.”*

Now, what is thus said about the difference of the two influences may be all very true and very good. But Mr Gurney himself must at once be sensible, that the question is not about the difference of the influences themselves, but about the means of distinguishing them; and that to this question the latter part alone of what has just been cited is at all relevant. Before noticing, however, the two lines of distinction, here stated and subsequently illustrated, it may be remarked in general, that the very necessity of specifying various tests, by which, independently of the criterion of the written word,—the one guide is to be discerned from the other,—and tests, too, of which the correct application requires the experience of one who has “learned the lesson of waiting upon God,” and “whose religion is of no shallow character,”—should of itself be sufficient to show the questionableness of the independent guidance contended for,—and contended for, not merely as the special attainment of advanced Christians, but as the common privilege, under the New Covenant, of all believers. It must not be forgotten, how many and how strong are the admitted causes of self-delusion

* Observations, &c. pages 83, 84.

which, singly or unitedly, serve to hinder the correct application of the distinctive tests.—But let me notice the tests themselves.

Fourthly: With regard to the first of the two, the *mode of operation*, it does appear to me, I confess, to be a very inadequate one. The illustration given of it is beautiful; but I cannot allow the mere gratification of taste, or even the pleasing emotions of Christian feeling, to prevent me from analysing the test itself, and so to mislead me into an erroneous judgment. The test is substantially (for, however willing to do so, I cannot afford to quote by pages)—the difference between mental restlessness and mental stillness;—the violence, on the one hand, of the impulses of the imagination, the confusion and disquietude of mind in which they “lay hold of us,” indicating sufficiently the predominance of self,—and, on the other hand, the quietness and gentleness of “the voice of Jesus in the heart,” the calm and humble subjection of spirit to God in which the true guidance is obtained.—This is precisely one of those cases, (of which, in our present controversy, there are not a few,) which have in them a certain amount of truth, but still, not an amount sufficient for the purpose they are introduced to serve. Is it so, that the human imagination never operates deceitfully, excepting in seasons of peculiarly fervid and turbulent excitement? “It may often,” says Mr Gurney, “when applied to matters of

“religion, be described as working in the whirlwind.” Granted. But does it never work *except* in the whirlwind? Are there no illusory lights—no *ignes fatui*—that ever mislead the contemplative and musing mind? Have no errors ever been found in systems of quietism—no mystic hallucinations—no meditative aberrations from truth? Has it not, in experience, been far otherwise? And, Mr Gurney himself being judge,—differing, widely differing, as he does, on important principles, from the more ancient oracles of your community,—may not Quakerism itself be adduced as an exemplification of the untenableness of his own position? It will never hold, that the mere process of “*getting still*” is a thorough safeguard against the intrusion of heretical thoughts, or even at times of the very wildest imaginations. A prolific fancy may hatch whole broods of errors, in all the calmness of contemplative incubation.—Has there never been a degree of illusory confidence produced by the very stillness itself recommended as the posture of mind for genuine divine communications? Has no false assurance ever been engendered, respecting particular views, by this very consideration—the assurance, that, because they were suggested in the prescribed stillness, they must be divine?—There is taste and beauty in the allusion to the *wind*, and the *earthquake*, and the *fire*, and the *still small voice*, of Horeb:—and there is, what is far better,

the depth and tenderness of piety in the application of this allusion :—" When the pride of the heart is "laid low, when the activity of human reasoning is "quieted, when the soul is reduced to a state of "silent subjection in the presence of its Creator, then "is this 'still small voice' intelligibly heard, and the "word of the Lord, as it is inwardly revealed to us, "becomes 'a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto "our paths.' " But there is a claim involved in these words, of which, be it ever so humbly and devoutly made, I cannot admit the validity. I must deny, that it is "the word of the Lord, *as inwardly revealed to us*," that is to be "the light of our feet, and the lamp of our paths." This proceeds on the assumption of immediate revelation,—the assumption, that what is "inwardly revealed to us" possesses the same authority with what was revealed to God's "holy apostles and prophets by his Spirit :"—and, in order to its possessing the same authority, it must have the same certainty of its coming from God. Yet Mr Gurney will not venture to affirm this ; and in declining to affirm it, and admitting that the criterion prescribed is neither universal nor sure, he seems to me to surrender every thing in his "perceptible guidance" that is really distinctive of Quakerism :—"If, "however, there are persons (as I believe there are) "of real piety, who desire to follow the guidance of "their Lord and Master, and yet have not learned

“to distinguish, as they would wish to do, the in-
 “ternal manifestation of his Holy Spirit, let them
 “not be unprofitably discouraged. Let them rather
 “pursue their course in humble reliance on the mercy
 “of God; and let them cultivate the animating hope
 “that, as they are preserved in dedication to the
 “divine will, and grow in grace, they will gradually
 “become better acquainted with the word of the
 “Lord within them, and will be comforted to a
 “greater degree with the light of his countenance.”
 —But in the meanwhile, what are they to do for a
 “light to their feet and a lamp to their paths?” Are
 they to have none?—or are they to have one that
 only glimmers uncertainly, and leaves them in the
 depression of despondency, or the irresolution of
 doubt? Would it not be far better, and far more
 consistent, in Mr Gurney,—seeing “the word of the
 Lord *within*” is thus uncertain, and exposed to so
 many occasions of hesitancy, to point all his fellow-
 christians at once to the word *without*, and to recom-
 mend the written record of accredited and ascer-
 tained inspiration, as the TRUE AND ONLY LIGHT,—
 the sure guide to truth, to duty, and to happi-
 ness?

Fifthly: With regard to the second of Mr Gurney’s
 two tests, it can hardly fail to strike every reader of his
 work, how very near he approaches in it to the ordi-

nary statements of *evangelical Christians*.^{*}—I am not quite sure, indeed, whether I have a correct apprehension of Mr Gurney's classification of Christians according to the views entertained by them on the subject of the Spirit's influence. He says, as already quoted,—“Some persons conceive that the Spirit of God does not influence the heart of man *directly*, but only through the means of certain appointed instruments; such as, the Holy Scriptures, and the word preached. Many others, who allow the direct and independent influences of the Spirit, and deem them absolutely essential to the formation of the Christian character, refuse to admit that they are perceptible to the mind; but consider them to be hidden in their actions, and revealed only in their fruits.” If by the former of these classes Mr Gurney means those who identify the influence of the Spirit with the influence of the word, and call the latter by the designation of the former, merely because the word has been given by the Spirit,—I cannot regard such persons as maintaining the doctrine of the Spirit's influence *at all*. They maintain, indeed, the inspiration of the word; but there, according to them, the agency of the Spirit

^{*} I use the designation, of course, merely for distinction's sake,—for there can be no Christian who is not evangelical, unless a man can be a Christian without being a believer of the gospel.

terminates: inasmuch as, the word, though given by the Spirit's inspiration, is not the Spirit himself; nor, consequently, the influence of the word the influence of the Spirit himself.—But if he means, that they who affirm the influence of the Spirit to be exerted “through the means of certain appointed instruments, such as the Holy Scriptures and the word preached,”—that is, more briefly, that they who affirm the Spirit's influence to be *by the word*, do by such affirmation *deny it to be direct*,—I conceive him to be in a mistake. I refer you to what has already been briefly said on this point—pages 99—101. I cannot conceive of any influence of the Spirit, at all deserving of the designation, that is *not direct*,—directly exerted, I mean, upon the minds and hearts of men. To say, at the same time, that it is *by means of the word*, is not at all inconsistent, as already shown. The influence is not *upon the word*, but *upon the mind*; but it is upon the mind, when the word has been, or is at the time, presented to it; imparting, in a way which He who promises the influence admonishes us not to expect clearly to understand, a spiritual discernment of the divine excellence of what had previously appeared foolishness, and so disposing to the cordial and grateful acceptance of what had before been rejected with worldly-minded indifference, or with the antipathy of offended pride. It is not, then, the *di-*

rect influence of the Spirit that we question ; it is his *independent* influence. It is an influence independent of the word,—operating, —that is, not upon the mind *with* or *by* the word, but upon the mind *apart from* or *without* the word.—Who the “many others” are, whom Mr Gurney distinguishes from the “some” that deny the *direct* influence of the Spirit, as “allowing “his direct and *independent* influences, and deeming “them absolutely essential to the formation of the “Christian character,” though they “refuse to admit that they are perceptible to the mind,”—I confess myself at a loss to know. I am inclined to think that, in this description, the terms “*direct* and *independent*” have inadvertently been used as, in their signification, nearly if not absolutely synonymous. They are not so, however. That influence may be direct which is not (in the sense already defined) independent. And I am not, I repeat, at present aware, of whom that numerous class of evangelical professors consists, by which the influences of the Spirit, independently of the written and preached word, are “deemed absolutely essential to the formation of the Christian character.” The generally prevailing sentiment is assuredly different:—that, in conversion, the truth is presented to the mind, in the written word, or by the ministrations of God’s servants ; and that the Holy Spirit, operating by an influence upon the understanding and heart, of which the *mode* is to

us a secret, imparts such a conviction of the need of salvation, and such a perception of the divine excellence and suitableness of the salvation which the gospel reveals, both in its nature and in its ground, as induces the immediate, grateful, and joyful acquiescence of the sinner in the proposed terms,—his humble acceptance of the offered blessings as “the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord,”—his penitential shame and sorrow for the past,—and his sincere desire and determination to “live henceforward not unto himself, but unto him who died for him and who rose again”—to “glorify God in his body and in his spirit which are God’s:”—and that, in progressive sanctification, the Spirit is still the Agent, working with divine efficiency; and the word, whether read, or heard, or embodied in symbolical ordinances, still the instrumental means.—The reality of the change, and the progress of the new life in the soul, are evinced by corresponding fruits. And here is the point to which I referred, when I said that Mr Gurney’s statements approach so very near to those of evangelical Christians in general. The second of his two tests, by which the genuine guidance of the Spirit and the false guidance of the human imagination are to be distinguished, is—“*the fruits which they produce:*”—and by these fruits we are to understand, not merely the inward effects experienced in the soul, but the outward effects on the

conduct of the life. "Here," says Mr Gurney, referring to "the outward conduct of the man,"—"Here the difference between the fruits of two distinct and even opposite principles, becomes completely manifest." And he proceeds, in a way to which few Christians will be disposed to object, to point out the appropriate and distinctive indications of the one and of the other. Now, wherein consists the wide difference, between the sentiments of those who, according to Mr Gurney, consider the influences of the Holy Spirit to be "hidden in their action, and revealed only in their fruits,"—and the view given by Mr Gurney himself, when he represents those influences as "perceptible" indeed in their action, but, at the same time, the minds that are conscious of them, as subject in such a degree to various influences of an opposite description,—the deceptive influences of a carnal or an enthusiastic imagination,—as to bring their reality into reasonable question, and to render the application of certain practical tests necessary to their authentication?—To my mind, I confess, the difference appears to be very minute, between an influence, imperceptible in its immediate action, but of which the *reality* is manifested by its fruits, and an influence, professedly perceptible in its action, but of which the *genuineness* must be manifested by its fruits. They are both influences, of which the fruits

are admitted to be the only unequivocal evidence.—
 “We may readily accede,” says Mr Gurney, “to
 “the principle laid down by Locke, that we can en-
 “ertain no reasonable confidence in any supposed
 “spiritual illumination, farther than as we are fur-
 “nished with evidence that it proceeds from God.
 “Now, that the perceptible influence of the Spirit
 “upon the soul proceeds from God, the Christian
 “enjoys satisfactory evidence—first in the declara-
 “tions of Scripture, that such an influence shall be
 “bestowed upon him,—and secondly in the practi-
 “cal results into which it leads. ‘He that believeth
 “on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.’
 “He brings his own sensations to the test of expe-
 “rience. *He knows the tree by its fruits.*” *—Sure-
 ly, if by the believer’s “having the witness in him-
 self,” we are to understand his “bringing his sensa-
 tions to the test of experience”—his “knowing the
 tree by its fruits,”—the difference between Mr Gur-
 ney as a Quaker, and his fellow-christians of other
 denominations, is as far as may be from being insur-
 mountable. What the Quaker professes to be con-
 scious of is the direct influence of the Spirit:—what
 other Christians professes to be conscious of is the
 direct influence of truth:—but the latter acknow-
 ledge the Spirit’s illumination as giving them rightly

* Observations, &c. page 89.

to discern the truth, and the Spirit's subduing energy as disposing them to obey it; while the former acknowledges that the influence of the Spirit, of which he is conscious, must, if genuine, be according to truth;—and both the one consciousness and the other are admitted to be susceptible of illusion, and to require being tried by the criterion—the only unequivocal one—of their practical results.

I shall only add here, that when Mr Gurney in support of the principle maintained by him, of the direct intimations of the Spirit to the mind as “*the main rule in life*,”—makes his appeal, to examples of individual friends,—he ought not to forget, how large a host of similar examples of Christian excellence can be mustered amongst those who profess to take for *their* “main rule in life,” the written word of God, looking for the Spirit to incline them to follow its dictates, and to “lead them,” by means of it, “in the way everlasting.”—“Although discouragement may often overtake us, through the misconduct of unsound brethren, my young friends, with myself, have enjoyed many opportunities of watching the demeanour and conduct of experienced persons, who profess that obedience to the dictates of the Spirit of Truth, in the soul, is their *main rule in life*; and who, by a long course of patience and self-denial, have fully evinced the sincerity of their profession. Now, we are certainly well

“aware, and we need not fear to acknowledge, that
 “the character and deportment of such persons are
 “distinguished for sobriety and substantial excel-
 “lence, and that, however various may be their
 “situations, their talents, and their gifts, they resem-
 “ble one another in this main characteristic—that
 “they are fulfilling the law of love, and living a life of
 “piety and usefulness.”*—Now, *mutatis mutandis*—
 or rather, I should say, *mutato mutando*, for there is
 but a single alteration necessary—changing “the
 dictates of the Spirit of Truth *in the soul*” to “the
 dictates of the Spirit of Truth *in the word*,”—the
 same thing may be truly affirmed of many, in every
 evangelical body of Christian professors. But Mr
 Gurney, I trust, will not deem me impertinent if I
 put a question to him, respecting the excellent per-
 sons to whose characters he thus appeals. I might
 ask two, indeed. I might ask, whether these were
 not persons who had been early trained under
 the inculcated and exemplified influence of the law of
 “love” and of the principles of piety and usefulness :
 —but the question which I am most solicitous to press,
 referring for the answer to his own knowledge and
 observation, is, whether they have not, in general
 if not even invariably, been persons who have been
 more than ordinarily conversant with the written

* Observations, &c. pages 87, 88.

word, the holy oracles of divine truth,—their minds familiar with their precious contents, and their spirits imbued with their peaceful and holy influence ;—and how far, therefore, while they professed to follow the immediate intimations of the Spirit, their exemplary characters were not moulded, even more than they might themselves be aware, and more than the supporters of their system might be willing to perceive, by that very word to which they theoretically assigned an inferior place and a subordinate influence ;—whether, in short, the *secondary rule* in theory, was not—however reluctant the Friends may be to grant it—the *primary rule* in actual operation and guidance ;—and whether, while *theoretically differing* from their fellow-christians, they were not, in a very great degree, in point of fact, *practically one* with them.

6. In the observations with which Mr Gurney closes his chapter on “perceptible influence and guidance,”—Christians of other denominations will not differ from him or from one another. They specify various “characteristics” of this guidance,—“way-marks” of distinction between the path of the Spirit of truth and that of the spirit of error. They relate to tenderness, contrition, and lowliness of heart ;—to the daily exercise of self-denial ;—to progress in the perceptions and sensibilities of conscience ;—to correspondence between the law in the Book and the law in the heart ;—and to exactness,

comprehensiveness, unmixedness, of obedience to the divine will.—Were some of the observations carried out into practical detail, differences there would be; but in regard to the great marks of divine influence laid down there can be none. That influence, according to Mr Gurney's own summing up of its practical manifestations, "is ever found to lead to the
 "humiliation of men, and to the exaltation of Christ;
 "to the denial of self, and to the bearing of the cross;
 "to the increase of moral and spiritual light; to the
 "confirmation and right application of the divine
 "law, as it is recorded in the Holy Scriptures; and
 "to a very exact fulfilment of that law." *

I wish you, however, specially to observe, that, in the illustration of one of these marks, Mr Gurney appears to me to suggest the precise principle of interpretation according to which all the passages relative to the influence, the guidance, the witness of the Spirit ought to be explained. I refer to Observation fourth:—"Since the inward manifestations of divine
 "light in the soul, if attended to, lead invariably into
 "the practice of Christian graces; and since those
 "graces are clearly described and enjoined in the
 "Holy Scriptures, (especially in the New Testa-
 "ment,) it is plain that these two practical guides to
 "righteousness will ever be found in accordance with

* Observations, &c. page 96.

“each other. The law written in the Book and the law written on the heart have proceeded from the same Author: the only standard of both of them is the will of God; and therefore they can never fail to correspond.”*—This is important truth; and it may, with all safety, be granted, that, whensoever we find a correspondence between the heart and the book,—a correspondence, of course, evinced by a parallel correspondence between the heart and the life,—there the Spirit of God has been at work. These are *effects*, these are *fruits*, of his operation, which can have no other origin, and which are of a nature not to be mistaken. The question, however, would still remain, whether the change expressed by the promise “I will write my law in their inward parts,” had been effected by the Spirit independently of the word of truth, or by means of it;—and whether that word was still to be, to the renewed sinner, “the light of his feet and the lamp of his path,” or the immediate intimations of the Spirit to his own mind without it.—In pleading for the *independent* guidance of the Spirit, Mr Gurney adheres to one of the most objectionable articles of the Quaker system; an article, too, which, every reader of his works must be sensible, he finds it no easy matter to maintain in full consistency with his modified sentiments

* Observations, &c. pages 92, 93.

on other points, and especially with the high ground he occupies regarding the paramount authority of the Holy Scriptures. We have an exemplification of this in the very sentences I have just quoted, taken in connexion with what immediately follows. “The law written in the Book, and the law written on the heart, have proceeded from the same Author: —*the standard of them both is the will of God*: “and therefore they cannot fail to correspond.” Granted. The axiom of geometry, that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another, cannot be surer. But then, although the truth of the abstract proposition, that the law in the Book and the law in the heart have the divine will for their common standard,—it must be not less evident, that *to us* there is no such standard. Where have *we* any standard to which we can bring the *law in the Book*? When the Book has been ascertained (as it has been by many infallible proofs) to have been “given by inspiration of God,”—then the law contained in it becomes to us the infallible record of his will;—which is, in effect, the same with its being the *standard* of that will. We have no standard by which to try the law in the Book; but the law in the Book becomes the standard by which we must try every thing else that professes to be an intimation of the divine will. What follows? Why, that the law in the Book must be the standard of the law in the

heart. But if we had, in the sense in which true Friends contend for them, the direct, independent, perceptible, and infallible intimations of the Spirit to our own minds, not only should we have no need for such a standard, but we might even, with truth and safety, reverse the position, and make these intimations the standard of those on record,—that is, make the law in the heart the standard of the law in the Book!—But the truth is, the law in the heart and the law in the Book are not to be regarded as two distinct things, of which each is produced independently of the other, and which, when afterwards compared, are found to correspond. The law in the Book already exists; and its existence is assumed in the promise —“I will put my law in their mind and write it in their heart.” The promise relates to the law which God had given to Israel. He had given it on tables of stone; and the spirit and substance of the new covenant promise is, that it should be written “not on tables of stone, but on the fleshly tables of the heart;” —that is, that the Lord, by his Spirit, would impart a spiritual knowledge of it, in all its precepts, and dispositions of heart in conformity with its dictates. Mr Gurney is far from setting up the law in the heart as a standard for the law in the Book. On the contrary, he immediately subjoins:—“Scripture is a
 “divinely authorized *test*, by which we must try, not
 “only all our sentiments in matters of doctrine, but

“all our notions and opinions respecting right and
 “wrong. ‘To the law and to the testimony; if they
 “speak not according to this rule, it is because there
 “is no light in them.’” But in this, I apprehend,
 Mr Gurney is hardly consistent with himself. If
 “we are all furnished” (independently of the word)
 “with an inward Guide and Monitor, who makes
 “his voice known to us, and who, if faithfully
 “obeyed and closely followed, will infallibly conduct
 “us into true virtue and happiness, because he leads
 “us into a real conformity with the will of God;”—
 where is our need of such a test? If the Spirit’s
 voice is a *known* voice, and requires no more, in
 order to our being *infallibly* guided into all virtue,
 than being “*faithfully obeyed and closely followed*,”
 a test appears to me a very nugatory thing. And
 who could have expected a writer, by whom the “per-
 ceptible guidance of the Spirit” is spoken of in terms
 so decided and strong, to fall into the ordinary phra-
 seology of other persons and other sects, and conde-
 scend to speak of “our *notions and opinions* respect-
 ing right and wrong?” This is coming down to com-
 mon ground. Are the dictates, then, of this percep-
 tible and infallible guide, to be regarded, after all, as
 no more than “notions and opinions,” which require,
 ere they can be adopted and followed, to be scrutin-
 ized by the standard of “the Law and the Testi-
 mony?”—Expressions of a similar kind do at times

escape Mr Gurney, from which (without, I trust, incurring the charge of catching at little incidental slips, or making a man an offender for a word) I am constrained to infer, that his views respecting the rule of faith and duty are more in accordance with those of his brethren of other denominations than, as a Friend, he is willing to think; and that, in pleading, as he does, at once for the paramount authority of “the Law and the Testimony,” and for the perceptible and independent guidance of an infallible Monitor, he pleads for two things which cannot consistently be maintained together. The terms in which Mr Gurney invariably speaks of the Holy Scriptures,—and which it is my delight to find him using,—are such as to convert those employed by him respecting the independent influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit into little more than words without meaning.

Nowhere does this more remarkably appear, than in his “*Strictures on certain parts of an anonymous pamphlet entitled The Truth Vindicated,*” &c.; which have just come into my hands. Most cordially do I concur with him in the censures—far from unduly severe—which he there bestows upon the author of that work, to whom I have before had occasion repeatedly to advert. “*The Truth Vindicated*” certainly, in some parts of it, makes as near approaches to absolute deism, as it is possible to do without an

open and unqualified disavowal of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. When I spoke of the author formerly* as a “staunch and honest Friend,” and commended him, though not for his logic nor for his spirit, yet for his “manly and unblenching avowal of his principles,” I would not be understood as insinuating a like disrespect for the sacred volume even amongst the ancient Quakers;—though it has formerly been shown that, in one or two points, Barclay himself is far from being clear of similar ground of reprehension;—and though I cannot disguise the conviction, that the old Quaker doctrine,—the doctrine of *immediate inspiration* as the common privilege of New Testament believers,—had the unavoidable tendency to the depreciation of the Scriptures,—a tendency which only discovers itself in “The Truth Vindicated” with somewhat more than its legitimate amount. My judgment and my feelings being in thorough accordance with those of Mr Gurney in all that he says of the paramount authority of the word of God as contained in the Volume of Revelation, I cannot see how he can be in harmony with himself, till he has thrown aside the remnant of Quaker doctrine to which he still tenaciously clings;—I mean this *immediate revelation*, under the modified designation by which he has chosen to qualify and to re-

* Page 23.

commend it. I cannot but fancy to myself the surprise and indignation with which some of the old fathers of Quakerism would be stirred, by the attempt to explain away, to so great an extent, their most favourite dogmas, and to fritter down the meaning of their phraseology, till there is hardly left a shred of distinction between them and the Christian world at large.—I frankly own, that the anonymous author of “The Truth Vindicated” does not appear to me—bating the unseemly scornfulness and the insufferable grossness and insolence of his style,—to go very far beyond the sequences that are fairly deducible from the doctrine of *immediate inspiration* as avowed in the writings of the older Friends; and I believe there are not a few in the Body now, who conceive that author to have made a bold and consistent stand for the true original principles of Quakerism. I cannot but consider him, on the ground of these principles, as sufficiently warranted in saying—“Therefore, “when men assert that the writings of other men “who lived centuries ago, and wrote under the influence of the Holy Spirit, are ‘a higher rule’ to “me than the influence of the *same* Holy Spirit upon “MY OWN mind; I surely am not to be dissuaded by “an assertion, grounded upon no reason whatever, “that these admit of no comparison.”* If the pre-

* Truth Vindicated, 2d edit. p. 91.

mises be granted, of the reality of immediate inspiration, is not this perfectly fair? If the direct dictates of the Holy Spirit are indeed enjoyed now, why should not his modern dictates “admit of comparison” with his ancient dictates—the Spirit now, with the Spirit then? This very word—“*then*”—when applied to the sacred volume, comprehends a vast period of time. Centuries and millenniums passed away between the writing of the first and the last books in the inspired canon: but we are not shocked at the idea of comparing the Spirit in John with the Spirit in Moses. If the Spirit be given still, in the form of immediate communication of the mind and will of God, why should we be at all startled at the thought of comparing the Spirit in any New Testament believer with the Spirit in either Moses or John? On the supposition of such communications being made, they *must* be of the *same authority*; for it is the authority of the same Spirit,—divine authority.—And this leads me to notice the manner in which Mr Gurney softens down,—in a way which he means for eulogy, but which they, I ween, would have disowned as insult,—the terms used of old by the fathers of Quakerism, respecting the *primary* and the *secondary rule*. After having discussed this point so much at large, I am not going to resume it. But when Mr Gurney alleges that the distinction was not, by the “early Friends,” intended

“to apply to the question of authority, but only to that of *order* and *dignity*,” I cannot think he does these early Friends justice.—By the Spirit, if they meant any thing at all distinctive of themselves from other professed Christians,—they meant the Spirit *as imparted to their own minds*. It was in this sense alone that the Spirit could be a rule at all. Now in this sense, the Spirit was not, in point of fact, first *in order*,—nor was it possible for them to think so, without thinking their own existence to have preceded that of apostles and prophets: and to fancy them to have meant by the term *primary* merely that the Spirit had a prior existence to the communications that proceeded from him, would be to impute to them, with the view of protecting them from the charge of heresy, a weakness absolutely infantile. If, in their use of it, the term had reference to *order*, there was, without question, associated with this the inferential notion of *superiority*.—And then, as to *dignity*—there was not surely more of dignity in the dictates of the Spirit to their own minds (which was what they meant when they called the Spirit a Rule) than in the dictates of the Spirit to prophets and apostles:—and if any should allege all they meant to have been, that the Holy Spirit, *personally* considered, had more dignity than his communications,—they would make them mean, if the sentiment were analysed, neither more nor less than—nothing

at all:—for certainly, as a Rule, the Spirit, personally considered, was to them nothing. He was to them nothing, except as being in them, as their infallible monitor and guide, imparting to them his direct communications. It was *these*, therefore, that they regarded as the primary rule; and still, beyond all controversy, with the idea of *superiority* involved in that of *priority*.—Mr Gurney has more good sense than to suppose them to have meant the Spirit *personally*. “They looked upon *the influence of the Spirit* as the primary rule,” says he; and he proceeds to assign their reasons for so regarding and so calling it. But with all my high estimation of Mr Gurney’s integrity and candour, it is not without some little difficulty I can persuade myself of his being, in his own mind, fully convinced that these reasons would have been *homologated* (to use a term of Scottish law)—that is, appropriated and acknowledged as their own,—by the “early Friends;” inasmuch as they are reasons which involve nothing peculiar—unless it be in a small fraction of their import—but might obtain the concurrent assent of Christians universally:—“They “looked upon the influence of the Spirit as the “primary rule, because it is the very source of true “religious knowledge:”—who will question this?—“because it operated among men before the Scriptures were written, and still operates, in a certain

“measure, where they are unknown:”—slightly qualified, who will question this?—“and because it “is the originating power from which the Scriptures “themselves proceeded:”—and who, we may emphatically say, will question this?—I ask Mr Gurney, as an honest man—and such I firmly believe him to be—whether these were the points which were denied or questioned when Quakerism had its origin,—and whether these were the grounds on which its originators founded their system of distinctive principles and practices?—Was it not “the influence of the Spirit” *in themselves*, that they regarded as the *primary rule*?—and did they not mean, by calling it the primary rule, that *this* influence was entitled to be first regarded and first obeyed?—and when they called the Scriptures a *secondary rule*, did they not intend to place it *in subordination* to the primary,—to be attended to only in the second place,—its dictates being indirect, while those to themselves were immediate? And I ask Mr Gurney farther, whether any genuine Friend, of the old school, would have taken into his lips, or recorded with his pen, the sentiment—“If we give up the Holy Scriptures as the test—the adequate and only written test—by which *supposed revelations* respecting either doctrine or practice must be tried, *we at once yield ourselves a prey to wild and unrestrained enthusiasm?*”—Could any opponent of Qua-

kerism desire stronger language than this, in regard to all pretensions to immediate revelation,—and the danger of trusting to any thing of the kind? And is such an admission in harmony with Mr Gurney's own representations of “the inward Guide or “Monitor, who, if faithfully followed and closely “obeyed, leads infallibly into a real conformity with “the will of God?” I am unable to reconcile the two representations. I believe the former—the admission of the perilous tendency of trusting to “supposed revelations,” to be, of the two, by much the nearer to truth; and it is only, after all, a stronger and more unfettered expression of what Mr Gurney, with somewhat more of cautious discretion, states in his larger work, when he suggests some of the various sources of illusion to which the professed possessors of immediate Divine influence are exposed.—The views of this intelligent and highly gifted Friend respecting the authority of the Holy Scriptures, as the “ultimate appeal in every case of doubt “or controversy in relation to matters either of doctrine or of moral principle,” are worthy of himself, and worthy of the Book of God, and such, in every respect, as must meet the approbation of Christians of all denominations:—“There lies no appeal from “it to any higher authority whatsoever; for the simplest and most powerful of all reasons—namely, “that the authority of the declarations which God

“has made is the authority of God himself.” But by his enlightened views of this subject, some modification of the sentiments held and avowed by the older Quakers, respecting the direct communications of the Spirit to the souls of God’s people now, was rendered indispensable. It is on the ground of these sentiments that both Dr Hancock and the author of “Truth Vindicated,” go such unwarrantable lengths in regard to dependence on immediate guidance. I say unwarrantable, when I speak of them in themselves; but really, if the truth of the sentiments were assumed, I should be at a loss for a reason to prevent my going along with the former, when he says—“I cannot admit that the “Scriptures, divine and excellent as they are, and “blessed, I trust, as means auxiliary to salvation, to “thousands and millions, are to be placed *above the “teaching of God’s Holy Spirit by immediate revelation;*”—or with the latter, when, in addition to what has already been quoted, he says—“I cannot “therefore see how any *higher rule* can by possibility exist, than that by which we are led, and in “which we are to walk—*even the blessed Spirit of “Christ.*” Such views as Mr Gurney exhibits of the paramount and ultimate and only authority of the divine oracles, are calculated to repress these “great swelling words of vanity:”—but it may be worth his while to consider, how far the salutary

tendency of his views on this point, will not, to a degree which he would himself lament, be counter-acted by the manner in which he still writes on the “perceptible guidance of the Spirit.”

There is one sentence of Mr Gurney’s in the “Strictures” referred to, which requires only to be followed out, and separated from surrounding matter, to form a correct representation of the truth on this all-important subject—“That in order to a saving apprehension of the truths contained in the Sacred Volume, the enlightening influence of the Holy Ghost is absolutely indispensable.”* O that Mr Gurney would but abide by the simple principle involved in these few words; recognising the Holy Scriptures as the source of saving knowledge, and the Holy Spirit as the Author of spiritual illumination in the soul, in order to the right discernment and believing acceptance of the truths which they reveal!—The principle is in full concord with another passage from his pen, in his Essay on Love to God. He is speaking of the change necessary in sinful man, in order to his fitness for fellowship with God and for the joys of heaven. “In effecting this blessed change,” says he, “in the affections of fallen man, the Holy Spirit makes use of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, as his grand appoint-

* Strictures, &c. page 23.

“ed instrument. That gospel, written in the Holy Scriptures, and preached by the Lord’s messengers, is a spiritual weapon of heavenly mould; and, when wielded by a Divine hand, it penetrates the heart, and becomes ‘the power of God unto salvation.’”—Thus, in conversion, according to Mr Gurney himself, THE SPIRIT is the agent, and THE TRUTH the means. Let the same principle be applied to the subsequent advancement of the renewed soul in the divine life,—the process of progressive sanctification;—in this too let the Spirit be acknowledged the agent, and the truth the means;—and Mr Gurney is in full agreement with the whole body of evangelical professors of the Christian faith. And that this is the true scriptural representation of the case, evidence might be accumulated from the sacred volume. Our Lord prays—John xvii. 17. “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth:”—and Peter says respecting the Gentile believers,—Acts xv. 8, 9. “And God, who knoweth the hearts, bare them record, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us: and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.” The truth or word of God, then,—received in faith,—is the instrumental means of sanctification; and the Spirit of God, freely bestowed by Him, is the agent in giving efficiency to the means.—Such is the invariable statement of the Holy Scriptures. I have

already, in a former letter, cited passages in support of it. I may be allowed here a remark or two upon one more—1 Cor. ii. 14. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” This is plain. We need not trouble ourselves with any critical strictures, to ascertain the meaning of the designation “the natural man:”—it is quite enough for us to be assured, as we are by the apostle in the preceding chapter, that it includes, not merely the sensualist, or the man who gives himself up to animal gratifications and worldly pleasures, but also, and even especially, the philosophers, the men who “sought after wisdom,”—to whom, more than to any other class whatever, “the things of the Spirit” appeared “foolishness.” See 1 Cor. i. 18—25.—By “the things of the Spirit” are undoubtedly to be understood the things which God had already revealed by his Spirit to his commissioned and accredited servants—Chap. ii. 10. and which they spoke to their fellow-men, as the same Spirit gave them utterance, verse 13. These “things of the Spirit” then, correspond with “the testimony of God” which they “declared,” verse 1.—of which testimony the great and essential subject was “Jesus Christ—Christ crucified,” verse 2.—Those who declared this testimony were the “ministers by whom

the Corinthians had believed"—that is, by whose ministry the testimony which was the object of their faith had been imparted to them—Chap. iii. 5. iv. 15. and xv. 1, 2. The gospel was declared by the apostles; through their ministry it had come to the Corinthians; and, while by multitudes it was esteemed "foolishness," those to whom the apostle now wrote had discerned its excellence, and received it as the truth of God. This discernment they owed to the influence of God's Spirit. It was by the Spirit's own illumination that the suitableness, consistency, and glory of "the things of the Spirit"—the discoveries made in the gospel—were perceived.—Their "discerning" and "knowing" the things of the Spirit does not mean their receiving themselves any *direct communication* of truth to their minds, independent of apostolic testimony;—but precisely that "enlightening influence of the Holy Ghost," which Mr Gurney affirms "absolutely indispensable to a saving apprehension of the truths contained in the Sacred Volume:"—for the truths now contained there are the very same with those which were of old delivered to men by the living voice of God's inspired messengers.—It must further be sufficiently manifest, that, when the apostle affirms the inability of the natural man to *know* the things of the Spirit, he intends, not a mere knowledge of their *meaning*, (for the knowledge of that is necessary to their being

disbelieved and rejected,—necessary to their being accounted foolishness,) but the knowledge of them in such a way as that they no longer appeared foolishness, as they had done before, but, what they really were, “the power of God and the wisdom of God;” that is, the knowledge of them as divinely true and divinely excellent. This knowledge is the result of spiritual discernment; and this spiritual discernment, of the real but inexplicable operation of the Holy Spirit in the mind and heart.—There is thus a twofold work of the Spirit. There is his work in *inspiration* properly so called,—the infallible communication of divine truth to the minds of those “holy men of God” whose special commission it was to be, to make known that truth, with suitable attestation, to others:—and there is his work in ordinary *spiritual illumination*, or the removal from the mind and heart of those prepossessions against the truth thus revealed and attested, by which the discernment of its divine excellence is prevented, and it continues to be rejected as falsehood, and scorned as foolishness. For this latter description of divine influence we “earnestly contend,” as for a part of “the faith once delivered unto the saints.” The results of the other we consider as having been completed in the Holy Scriptures,—the only writings which we acknowledge as “given by inspiration of God.”—Mr Gurney “conceives, that

“ every true Quaker is prepared cordially to acknow-
 “ ledge that the Holy Scriptures, and they alone,
 “ are a divinely authorized record of all the doctrines
 “ which we are required to believe, and of all the
 “ moral principles that are to regulate our actions—
 “ not to mention the luminous declaration which they
 “ contain of our relative and particular duties.”*—
 This appears to reduce the difference between the
 Quakers and others, on this subject, to a very narrow
 point. It would be unseemly presumption in me to
 dispute the accuracy of Mr Gurney’s statements re-
 specting the views entertained by his own Body:—but
 really it is impossible to read the writings of the older
 Quakers—the Fathers of the family—without being
 sensible, that there is a prodigious softening down, on
 the part of this writer, of their opinions and language.
 When he represents “every true Quaker” as ready to
 acknowledge the Scriptures, “*and them alone*” as “a
 divinely authorized record” of doctrine and duty, he
 says what, in a certain sense, is true. But we have
 formerly had sufficient evidence before us of the
 qualifying limitations with which the representation
 must be understood. It is truth; but it can hardly
 be said to be the whole truth. Is it not equally true,
 that, while the Holy Scriptures, *and they alone*, are
 “ a divinely authorized *Record*” of the mind and will

* Strictures, &c. page 23.

of God,—yet “every true Quaker,”—every genuine follower of Fox, and Penn, and Barclay,—every consistent advocate of the “inward light” and of the “primary and secondary rule,”—holds also the divine authority of communications still made directly by the Spirit to the minds of God’s servants and people? Supposing it granted, then, that the Holy Scriptures are the only divinely authorized RECORD of truth and duty, of how little avail is such an admission, if men are still to be taught that their *first* attention is due to the movements of the SPIRIT HIMSELF in their own minds;—that it is in themselves, if they would but give this attention, that the Spirit “makes all things manifest;”—that this is the guide whom, in the first instance, they are to follow, while the Scriptures, being something merely outward, are to be regarded as “not the chief rule,”* but subordinate to this primary and superior direction? If the quotations formerly made, from Barclay and others, are not sufficient to bear me out in holding this to have been one of the elementary and essential principles of primitive Quakerism, I must own myself either mistaken or misled. My present conviction, however, is, that in so far as Mr Gurney holds a sentiment, and speaks a language, different from this, he must be considered as having, to that extent, aban-

* Barclay.

doned Quakerism. And indeed, on this and on various other points, it cannot fail to strike the most superficial reader, what a perfect contrast there is between the writings of Mr Gurney and those of "the early Friends." I am very far from wishing Mr Gurney to take a single step out of Quakerism in points where Quakerism is truth. In other points, however, he has already taken several,—and these, too, even larger strides than any that now remain for him to take. May the Divine Spirit be graciously pleased, by means of that complete revelation which He has given us, to lead, not him only, but you, my friends, and myself, and every fellow-christian and fellow-man around us,—INTO ALL TRUTH!

When I spoke of offering a few observations on some of the *practical bearings* of the theory of immediate manifestation, or "perceptible guidance," I had in view the two great subjects of the MINISTRY and the observance of EXTERNAL ORDINANCES. You have various other peculiarities besides these and such as arise out of them;—those especially which relate to war, to oaths, to plainness of speech, and to apparel. On these it was never my intention even to touch. My immediate object was to consider PRINCIPLES,—and such principles as were manifestly PRIMARY and FUNDAMENTAL. Even into the subjects of the ministry and of ritual observances I have

no intention of entering. They are subjects of high importance, and would require a more extended argumentation than it is now in my power to undertake. All that I purpose at present is, to offer a few brief remarks on the degree of authority, in determining such questions, ascribed by Mr Gurney, and by Quakers generally, to the Spirit's "perceptible guidance."

It is before proceeding to show that "the distinguishing views and practices of the Society of Friends are derived from the essential principles of the law of God"—"arising directly or indirectly out of these principles,"—that Mr Gurney introduces, as preparatory to his argument, the chapter of his work on the "perceptible influence and guidance of the Spirit:"—and, in the conclusion of that chapter, the reason of this arrangement appears. He there expresses, with all possible clearness, the bearing of this doctrine on the adoption of those peculiarities by which Quakers are distinguished.—"Now the first argument to be adduced," says he, "in support of this position"—(the position that the peculiarities of Friends arise out of the principles of the divine law)—"is immediately connected with the "doctrine unfolded in the present chapter. If the "question be addressed to us, why do we consider it "to be our duty to adopt our several religious peculiarities, we may answer, *because we believe we have*

“ *been led into them by the Spirit of truth.** The
 “ casual observer may, indeed, attribute our mainte-
 “ nance of them to the mere force of habit and edu-
 “ cation ; and certainly, there is much reason to ap-
 “ prehend, that, with too many amongst us, they rest
 “ upon no better foundation. Nevertheless, you whom
 “ I am now addressing can scarcely fail to be aware,
 “ that, with *real* Friends, the adoption and punctual
 “ observance of such a line of conduct are not only
 “ matters of honest principle, but are truly the con-
 “ sequence of obedience to their *inward guide*. It is
 “ a fact which the world can scarcely be expected to
 “ notice, but which is well known to every experi-
 “ enced Quaker, and will not be denied by any per-
 “ sons who possess an intimate knowledge of the So-
 “ ciety, that *the very same guiding and governing*
 “ *principle, which leads the sincere-hearted and seri-*
 “ *ous among Friends into the practice of universally*
 “ *acknowledged Christian virtues, leads them also into*
 “ *these peculiarities*. I am not asserting, that such
 “ would necessarily be the experience of all persons
 “ who endeavour to follow the guidance of the Spirit ;
 “ nor would I, in any respect, venture to set limits
 “ to the sovereignty, freedom, scope, and variety, of
 “ divine operation. I assert only that this is *our own*
 “ experience. Such, therefore, being our experience,

* The Italics throughout the paragraph are Mr Gurney's.

“ we cannot but derive from it a strong and satisfac-
 “ tory conviction that our religious peculiarities ap-
 “ pertain to the law of God ; for it is certain that the
 “ Spirit of truth, by whose influence alone men are
 “ made truly righteous, and brought into conformity
 “ with the divine will, would never lead *any* of the
 “ followers of Jesus into a course of conduct which
 “ is not founded on the principles of that law. The
 “ inward manifestations of the Spirit are, in them-
 “ selves, the law of God written on the heart.” *

This is a paragraph which would have come better from the pen of George Fox or Robert Barclay, than it does from that of Joseph John Gurney. To discuss its contents at large would necessarily lead me to much repetition. It suggests, however, a few reflections, which he must pardon me for frankly making :—

1. It is perfectly true,—“ certain,” as Mr Gurney affirms it to be,—that “ the Spirit of truth could never
 “ lead any of God’s children into a course of conduct
 “ which is not founded on the principles of the di-
 “ vine law :”—but has Mr Gurney forgotten the various sources of illusion, by which, upon his own admission, the dictates of the human imagination are liable to be mistaken for the suggestions of the Spirit? The Spirit of God can never lead astray :—but a

* Observations, &c. pages 97, 98.

man's fancy may lead him astray,—variously and wildly astray,—in regard to the fact of his having the Spirit,—and, consequently, in regard to whatever he may conceive to himself, or hold out to others, as a dictate of the Spirit. There can hardly be a principle more illusory, as a ground for the observance or non-observance of particular institutions. We may imagine ourselves “led into them by the Spirit of truth,” when we have been led only by the constitutional tendencies, or the educational, and even the capricious and unaccountable, predilections, of our own minds.

2. Is it consistent with the principle, so distinctly admitted by Mr Gurney, of the Holy Scriptures being the authorized record of truth and duty, to have recourse to the suggestions of an inward guide, and to expose ourselves, consequently, to so many risks of delusion? Why not at once “to the law and to the testimony?” Is there any necessity for more than an authorized record of the divine will, and a disposition humbly and implicitly to follow it? If it be alleged, that the record furnishes us chiefly with *principles*, while we are left to the direction of the inward guide in their application; I answer, *first*, that, even if this were true, there is a vast extent of room left for self-deception and extravagance in the application of principles; as the history of rites and ceremonies in the Christian church too amply testi-

fies:—and, *secondly*, that it is *not* true; there being actually contained in the record, in the form both of precept and example, such directions respecting external observances in the churches of Christ, as have misled the whole Christian world except the Quakers, and have required all the learning and ingenuity of the most learned and ingenious members of that community, to frame even a plausible apology for their omission. I am satisfied that no better exemplification could be produced of the danger of our being left to ourselves,—or left to the suggestions of any supposed “inward guide,” in the application of principles, than the manner in which the Friends themselves have disposed of these observances.

3. In examining the Scriptures to discover the will of God, there is nothing so important and necessary as freedom from all prepossession in behalf of any one principle or practice, more than another. Is it, then, a really favourable state of mind in which to come to the examination of the authorized Record, when there is a previous confidence in the intimations of another Guide,—a prepossession in favour of certain principles, and of certain applications of those principles, into which the subject of this guidance persuades himself he has been divinely led? Will not such a bias unavoidably sway the mind in one direction,—as the bias of a bowl on the smooth sward inclines it toward the point it was de-

signed to reach? We are sure to find what we are previously bent on finding. It will not do to say, that this bias is from the Spirit of God,—and that it cannot, therefore, sway the mind otherwise than in a right direction,—that is, towards the point of conformity with the mind of God in his word:—for this would be, most flagrantly, to beg the question,—to assume at once the divinity and the actual reality of the contested guidance.—Such a prepossession is far from being the less dangerous, that it is devout. Its having the sanction, in the mind, of a religious principle, only augments the hazard, by imparting to it a sacredness which the pious spirit fears to contravene. The better course, surely, is to come directly to the record, with a mind, through the supplicated influence of the Spirit of truth, humbly and steadfastly determined upon implicit submission,—seeking, with all “simplicity and godly sincerity,” an answer to the one question, “Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?”

4. It seems very unaccountable, that, in such a connexion as this, Mr Gurney should introduce the sentiment, that “the inward manifestations of the Spirit are, in themselves, *the law of God written on the heart.*”—Strange! The subject on the discussion of which Mr Gurney was about to enter, was the propriety or impropriety, the obligation or non-obligation, of certain “*outward religious points*” by

which the Friends are distinguished from other Christian professors. In what way a question of such a nature could be determined by the "law written on the heart," it is not easy to see. That law is, essentially, the law of love,—being summed up, by the highest authority, in the two great precepts of love to God and love to men. What connexion has this "law written on the heart" with the settlement of the controversy respecting the observance of water-baptism and the Lord's Supper? Were I to try the obligation of these two ordinances by their influence, respectively, upon love, the settlement of the controversy should not hang one moment in doubt;—their tendency, when rightly understood and scripturally celebrated, being eminently to the promotion of that divine and divinely blessed principle.—But the plain truth is, that these are matters, which can be determined by nothing else than the existence or non-existence of a divine enactment; and that this is what can be found nowhere but *in the Book*. The attempt to determine any such points by a reference to "manifestations of the Spirit," or to the "law written on the heart," is of all processes the most preposterous. Of all questions, those which relate to external observances are the least susceptible of settlement on any other ground than that of divine prescription:—and, if Friends profess to have been "led into their

peculiarities," whether of observance or of non-observance, "by the Spirit of truth," it is an appeal to the New Testament alone that can determine, whether that Spirit, or their own imagination, has been their real guide.

5. It is not denied, that *spirituality* is the distinguishing characteristic of New Testament worship; that "under the Christian dispensation, the worship of God is not to be formal, ceremonial, or typical, "but simply spiritual."*—As a general principle, we grant this; we advocate it; we are thankful for it; we delight in it. But we deny that this characteristic spirituality lays us under any necessity to exclude *all external observance whatever*. A characteristic distinction may exist, and exist in a remarkable degree, without such absolute exclusiveness. I appeal to Mr Gurney himself. He says—"The two systems of worship are described as completely distinct: the one was about to die away, the other to be established. The old worship consisted principally in the performance of typical rites. The new worship was of a precisely opposite character."† I am not going to enter into any dispute with Mr Gurney respecting the amount of spirituality required in the worship of the Old Economy. I only wish him,—and I wish you, my friends,—to

* Observations, &c. p. 100.

† Ibid. p. 117.

observe the qualifying word which he uses respecting it:—it “consisted *principally* in the performance of typical rites.” This, it seems, was sufficient to justify its designation as *worldly* and *carnal*. On what consistent ground, then, is *absolute exclusiveness*, in regard to all outward ceremonies, insisted upon as necessary to entitle the New Economy to the designation of *spiritual*? Is it not here admitted to be of a “precisely opposite character” to the old, if it consists *principally* of what is spiritual? Surely, the existence of two rites—and these two of such singular simplicity—can never be enough to deprive it of its spiritual character. It is not fair to say, that these observances “plainly appertain to the principle of the Old Covenant;” for on such a ground, *all spirituality whatever* must be excluded from the worship of the Old Covenant, as “plainly appertaining to the principle of the New.”—Farther:—Mr Gurney will not deny that, according to our mental constitution, inward affections are capable of being assisted, confirmed, and promoted, by means of exercises and observances that are external. He will not be so uncandid as to question, what accords with universal experience, and with every theory of the human mind. He is very well aware, that the *externality* of the Holy Scriptures themselves,—their being something entirely outward,—a mere written, or, in more modern days, a mere printed book,—is

one of the very grounds on which, by his brethren of olden time, and by some not so far back, they have been held in subordination to what is *inward*, to what is *spiritual*;—that the spirituality of the New Covenant dispensation is the very principle on which these sacred writings have been under-rated, and have been spoken of and written of, many a time, in terms and in a spirit so unworthy, and so revolting to every mind that feels their real preciousness, from the conviction of their exclusive authority.—The very reading of these Scriptures is an outward act; and an act that has been too frequently neglected, under pretext of dependence on more direct and spiritual guidance. Now, if the outward exercise of reading the Scriptures is necessary to the mind's receiving *information* of truth; is it at all inconsistent with the spirituality of the New Dispensation that there should be other outward acts and exercises adapted for the *impression* of truth? This is the real use of the few and simple rites of New Testament celebration. They embody and they impress truth;—and for their efficiency in answering their end, thousands and tens of thousands, of dead and living witnesses, might be summoned to testify. It has often struck my own mind, as one of the many evidences of divine wisdom in the constitution of the Gospel Economy, that while, by the abolition of the manifold typical rites of a burdensome ceremonial,

its spirituality stands out in full contrast with the opposite character of the system which preceded it, —there has not been an *entire cessation* of all appeal to that law of our constitution, by which the outward senses are rendered effectually and happily subservient to mental and spiritual impression. There is just enough of external observance, appointed by Him who “knoweth what is in man,” to answer sufficiently this end, without at all affecting the characteristic spirituality of the Dispensation. By setting aside even the little that the Head of the Church has sanctioned, Quakerism has marred instead of mending; as has invariably been the case with every attempt to improve upon divine counsels. “The foolishness of God is wiser than men.”—That the principle in our mental constitution, of which I now speak, has, by some religionists, been pushed, in its application, to an unwarrantable extreme, I readily grant. It has introduced crucifixes, and images, and pictures, and gorgeous vestments, and altars, and masses, and all the multiform mumery of Romish superstition. But if the Romanists, and some others, have gone to one extreme, the Friends, I conceive, have gone to the other;—if the one have been wrong in multiplying, the other have been wrong in annihilating. Antinomianism has been called *the ultraism of grace*; Quakerism might,

not less appropriately, be denominated *the ultraism of spirituality*. The principle of the Quaker system is, indeed, decidedly more in harmony with the Spirit of the New Testament than that of popish will-worship. But still it is an extreme; and both the one extreme and the other should teach us the all-important lesson—a lesson which can never be too strongly enforced, or too frequently reiterated—OF TAKING THE WORD OF THE LORD AS OUR ONLY GUIDE.

I must have done. The various questions on the subjects of *the ministry, water-baptism, the Lord's Supper, oaths, war, dress, church-taxes*, and other points of practical distinction between the Society of Friends and other religious bodies, I must leave untouched. Some of these, indeed, ought scarcely to be considered as distinctive. Nothing is, in strict propriety, entitled to the designation of a distinctive principle or a distinctive practice, which might be held, or which might be done, by members of other denominations, without any relinquishment of the tenets or the observances that constitute their own peculiarities.*

* This might be exemplified in the case of *oaths*, and of *war*, and of *taxes for the support of the endowed religion*. Their principles on all these subjects have been held by Christians belonging to other denominations than the Friends; and in some

But the whole of them together involve topics of discussion, such as might furnish ample materials for another volume, as large as the one I am now drawing to a close. It is true, that the questions relative to the *ministry*, and to the two ordinances of *baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*, are questions which, to the satisfaction of my own mind, are capable of being brought within very narrow compass. But thus briefly to dispose of them, I could not reasonably expect to be satisfactory to those whom I am addressing; nor would it be consistent with the estimation in which I hold such a defender of your system as Joseph John Gurney;—a writer, whose known character, associated with his scholarship, and taste, and eminent intellectual qualifications, repress effectually every sentiment of disrespect,—and whose gentlemanly and Christian spirit (I judge from his writings, not having the pleasure of personal acquaintance) preclude as effectually every emotion of irritability or bitterness.—I think it preferable, not to enter on these subjects at all; but rather to leave it with yourselves to carry out, in their application to them, the principles which it has been my object, in

instances, especially of late, the Quaker practice as well as the Quaker principle, has, in regard to the last of the three, been followed. They are, however, the only collective body by which these views are avowed, and by which the practice dictated by them is made a term of communion.

these letters, to establish. The points to which I have directed my assault have been those which I regarded as forming the very citadel of Quakerism. But my aim has been,—I say it in the full recollection that the eye of the Searcher of hearts is upon me,—not to overthrow Quakerism, but to overthrow ERROR. If, in any one point, I have aimed a shaft at truth, mistaking it for error, may the mistake, unconsciously committed, be graciously forgiven!—and if, in any one point, I have done injustice, either to your community collectively, or to any individual who has been or is now a member of it, may the same forgiveness be extended to the unintentional wrong!—forgiveness from you, and forgiveness from a higher Tribunal!—I have desired, throughout, to retain upon my mind the remembrance that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;” and that to indulge such a spirit is at once to bring guilt upon ourselves, and, by rousing resentment and jealousy, to counterwork our own professed design.—If, in any instance, I have been led to express myself strongly, give me credit when I assure you, that it has been “more in sorrow than in anger,”—in vehemence against what appeared to me perilous error, not against the persons by whom the error has been maintained. If, by the blessing of God, I shall have succeeded in displacing such error from any mind

in which it may heretofore have lodged, and introducing, in its room, salutary truth, I shall not have written in vain.

Once more, believe me,

Yours respectfully,

RALPH WARDLAW.

THE END.

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